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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

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The Human Comedy

PRIVATE LIFE

VOLUME V

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NATHAN'S ATTEMPT AT SUICIDE

Nathan was sitting in the arm-chair of the editor-in-chief, writhing in the death-agony.

"Break in the door and say nothing! I will buy your silence," she said. "Don't you see that Monsieur Nathan is dying?"

The boy ran to the printing-office for an iron form with which to break in the door. Raoul was dying of suffocation, like a common seamstress, through the medium of a chafing-dish of charcoal.

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC, now for the first time completely translated into English.

ALBERT SAVARUS. A DAUGHTER OF EVE. IN ONE VOLUME. TRANSLATED BY GEORGE BURNHAM IVES, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH FOUR ETCHINGS.

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ALBERT SAVARUS

TO MADAME EMILE DE GIRARDIN

ALBERT SAVARUS

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One of the few salons frequented by the Archbishop of Besançon under the Restoration, and the one to which he was most partial, was that of Madame la Baronne de Watteville. A single word concerning this lady, who was perhaps the most important personage of her sex in Besançon.

Monsieur de Watteville, grand-nephew of the famous Watteville, luckiest and most illustrious of murderers and renegades, whose extraordinary adventures are too much a matter of history to be narrated here, was as peaceable as his great-uncle was turbulent. After passing his early years in Franche-Comté like a worm in the chink of a wainscoting, he had married the heiress of the celebrated De Rupt family. Mademoiselle de Rupt brought an estate worth twenty thousand francs a year to add to Baron de Watteville's ten thousand a year in lands and houses. The Swiss gentleman's crest—the Wattevilles are Swiss—was quartered upon the ancient escutcheon of the De Rupts. This marriage, which had been agreed upon since 1802, was celebrated in 1815, after the second Restoration. Three years after the birth of a daughter, all

Madame de Watteville's grandparents were dead and their estates settled. They thereupon sold Monsieur de Watteville's house and took up their abode on Rue de la Préfecture in the noble old De Rupt mansion, whose vast garden reaches to Rue du Perron. Madame de Watteville as a girl was religiously inclined, and was even more so after her marriage. She was one of the queens of the devout sisterhood which gave the best society of Besançon a gloomy air and prudish manners quite in harmony with the character of the city.

Monsieur le Baron de Watteville, a dry, thin, spiritless creature, had the appearance of being utterly worn out, although nobody could say by what, for he enjoyed the densest ignorance; but as his wife was a warm blonde, and as her natural harshness of character had become proverbial—they still say: *angular as Madame de Watteville*—certain wags among the magistracy averred that the baron had worn himself out against that rock. Rupt is evidently derived from *rupes*. Keen observers of social phenomena will not fail to remark that Rosalie was the only fruit of the union of the Wattevilles and the De Rupts.

Monsieur de Watteville passed his life in a sumptuous turner's workshop; he turned! As a complement to that mode of existence he had adopted the fad of making collections. In the eyes of philosophical doctors who have given their attention to the study of madness, this tendency to make collections is the first step toward mental alienation, when

it expends itself upon trifles. Baron de Watteville collected shells, insects and geological fragments from Besançon and its neighborhood. A few contradictory spirits, women especially, said of Monsieur de Watteville:

"He has a noble mind! he saw at the outset of his married life that he couldn't get the upper hand of his wife, so he devoted his energies to a mechanical occupation and good living."

The De Rupt mansion did not lack a certain splendor worthy of Louis XIV., and bore marks of the nobility of the two families that were united in 1815. There was an air of old-time magnificence that knew nothing of fashion. The candelabra of leaf-shaped crystals, the Chinese silk hangings, the damasks, the carpets, the gilded furniture, all were in harmony with the old-fashioned liveries and the old servants. Although served in tarnished family plate, around a glass épergne embellished with pieces of Saxon porcelain, everything partaken of was of the best. The wines selected by Monsieur de Watteville, who, to occupy his time and give variety to his life, acted as his own butler, enjoyed departmental celebrity, so to speak. Madame de Watteville's fortune was considerable, but her husband's, which consisted of the estate of Rouxey, worth about ten thousand a year, was not augmented by any inheritance. It is useless to remark that the very close intimacy between Madame de Watteville and the archbishop had resulted in domesticating beneath her roof the three or four clever

and distinguished abbés in the archbishopric, who were not averse to the pleasures of the table. At a grand dinner given in honor of some wedding or other in the month of September, 1834, just when the women were drawn up in a circle in front of the fireplace in the salon, and the men standing in groups at the windows, the announcement of the arrival of Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey was greeted with a loud murmur of interest.

"Well, how about the lawsuit?" they cried.

"Won!" replied the vicar-general. "The decree of the court, that we despaired of obtaining, you know why—"

This was an allusion to the composition of the Royal Court since 1830. The Legitimists had almost all resigned therefrom.

"—The decree is in our favor on every point, and reverses the judgment of the court below."

"Everybody thought you had lost."

"And so we should have but for me. I told our advocate to take himself off to Paris, and just as the battle was about to begin I succeeded in retaining another advocate, to whom we owe our success—an extraordinary man—"

"Of Besançon?" artlessly inquired Monsieur de Watteville.

"Of Besançon," the Abbé de Grancey replied.

"Ah! yes, Savaron," observed a handsome youth named Soulas, who was sitting beside the baroness.

"He spent five or six nights on the case, and went through all the pleadings and documents; he

had seven or eight conferences of several hours each with me," continued Monsieur de Grancey, who had not appeared at the De Rupt mansion for three weeks. "At last Monsieur Savaron completely routed the famous advocate our opponents had down from Paris. The young man's performance was marvelous, so the councillors say. Thus, the chapter has won a double victory: it has triumphed in law, and in politics it has overcome liberalism in the person of the defender of our Hôtel de Ville. 'Our opponents,' said our advocate, 'should not expect to find everywhere a willingness to rend archbishoprics asunder—' The president was compelled to demand silence. All the Bisontins applauded. Thus the ownership of the buildings of the old convent remains in the chapter of the cathedral of Besançon. Monsieur Savaron, moreover, invited his professional brother from Paris to dine with him after the adjournment. In accepting the invitation he said: 'Honor to whom honor is due!' and congratulated him without the slightest ill-feeling."

"Where did you unearth this advocate, pray?" inquired Madame de Watteville. "I have never heard that name before."

"But you can see his windows from here," replied the vicar-general. "Monsieur Savaron lives on Rue du Perron, and there is only a wall between his garden and yours."

"He's not of the Comté, is he?" said Monsieur de Watteville.

"He comes so near being of nowhere, that nobody knows whence he is," said Madame de Chavoncourt.

"But who is he?" asked Madame de Watteville, as she took Monsieur de Soulas's arm to lead the way to the dining-room. "If he's a stranger how did he happen to settle in Besançon? It's a very strange notion for an advocate."

"Very strange!" echoed young Amédée de Soulas, as to whose previous life a few words must be said to make this narrative more intelligible.

From time immemorial France and England have carried on a large traffic in trifles,—a traffic the more generally pursued in that it is not subject to the tyranny of the custom-house. The fashions that we call English in Paris are called French in London, and *vice versa*. The hostility between the two nations disappears on two points—in the matter of words and in that of clothing. *God Save the King*, the English national air, is a piece of music composed by Lulli for the choruses of *Esther* or *Athalie*. The paniers brought to Paris by an Englishwoman were invented in London, everyone knows why, by a Frenchwoman, the famous Duchess of Portsmouth; we began by making such fun of them that the first Englishwoman who appeared in one at the Tuileries came within an ace of being trampled on by the mob; but they were adopted. That fashion tyrannized over the women of Europe for a half-century. After the peace of 1815 we joked for a whole year about the Englishwomen's

long waists, and all Paris went to see Potier and Brunet in *Les Anglaises pour Rire;* but in 1816 and 1817 the Frenchwoman's girdle, which used to cut her breast in two in 1814, descended by degrees until it outlined her hips. During the last ten years England has bestowed upon us two little linguistic gifts. To the *incroyable,* the *merveilleux,* the *élégant,* the three heirs of the *petits-maîtres*—coxcombs—whose etymology is far from refined,—have succeeded the *dandy* and the *lion.* The *lion* did not engender the *lionne.* The *lionne* we owe to Alfred de Musset's famous ballad: *Avez vous vu dans Barcelone—C'est ma maîtresse, ma lionne;*—there has been a fusion, or, if you please, confusion, between the two terms and the two dominant ideas. When Paris, which consumes as many *chefs-d'œuvre* as absurdities, is entertained by one of the latter, it is hard to deprive the provinces of it. And so, as soon as the *lion* began to exhibit in Paris his mane and beard and moustaches, his waistcoats and his monocle, held in place without the assistance of his hands by drawing together the cheek and the arch of the eyebrow, the capitals of certain departments witnessed an invasion of *sub-lions* who protested, by the elegance of their trouser-straps, against the careless habits of their compatriots. Thus Besançon, in 1834, was honored with the presence of a lion in the person of this Monsieur Amédée-Sylvain-Jacques de Soulas,—written Souleyas at the time of the Spanish occupation. Amédée de Soulas is probably the only person in Besançon descended

from a Spanish family. Spain sent people into Franche-Comté to look after her interests, but very few Spaniards settled there. The Soulases remained there because of their relations with Cardinal de Granvelle. Young Monsieur de Soulas was always talking about leaving Besançon, a melancholy, religion-ridden town, but little interested in literary matters, a garrison town, addicted to war, whose manners and morals and general appearance are worth the trouble of describing. This opinion made it excusable for him to live, like a man who was uncertain of his future, in three very scantily furnished rooms at the end of Rue Neuve, where it enters Rue de la Préfecture.

Young Monsieur de Soulas could not dispense with having a tiger. This tiger was the son of one of his farmers, a little stocky fellow of fourteen, named Babylas. The lion had dressed his tiger with excellent taste: a short iron-gray redingote with a polished leather belt, blue plush breeches, red waistcoat, varnished top-boots, round hat with black band, yellow buttons with the Soulas arms. Amédée kept the boy in white cotton gloves, gave him his washing and thirty-six francs a month, out of which he had to board himself,—monstrous wages in the eyes of the grisettes of Besançon: four hundred and twenty francs to a boy of fifteen, without counting perquisites! The perquisites consisted of the proceeds of the sale of cast-off clothing, a *pourboire* when Soulas sold one of his two horses, and the sale of manure. The two horses, although kept on a

basis of rigid economy, cost him eight hundred francs a year on an average. His account for sundries at Paris, perfumery, cravats, jewelry, jars of varnish, clothes, amounted to twelve hundred francs. If you add together the groom or tiger, horses, luxuries, and rent at six hundred francs, you will arrive at a total of three thousand francs. Now, young Monsieur de Soulas's father had left him only about four thousand a year, produced by certain beggarly farms which required a constant outlay, and that same outlay, too, rendered the income from them painfully uncertain. Barely three francs a day remained for the lion's living expenses, pocket-money and gambling. So he very often dined out, and breakfasted with remarkable frugality. When he was absolutely driven to dine at his own expense he sent his tiger to fetch two dishes from a cook-shop, on which he rarely expended more than twenty-five sous. Young Monsieur de Soulas was looked upon as a spendthrift, a man who threw money away upon foolish things; whereas the poor fellow struggled to make the two ends of the year meet with a talent and craft that would have won everlasting renown for a good housekeeper. People have no idea, especially at Besançon, what an impression may be produced at a provincial capital by six francs' worth of varnish displayed upon boots or shoes, yellow gloves at fifty sous cleaned with the utmost secrecy so that they may be worn three times, cravats at ten francs that last three months, four waistcoats at twenty-five francs, and trousers

that fit tightly around the boot! How could it be otherwise, when we see women in Paris bestowing particular attention upon idiots who come to their houses and outshine the most eminent men, because of such frivolous appurtenances which anyone can procure for fifteen louis, hair-curling and a Holland linen shirt included?

If this unfortunate youth seems to you to have become a lion at very small expense, understand that Amédée de Soulas had been three times to Switzerland, traveling by carriage by easy stages; twice to Paris and once from Paris to England. He was looked upon as an experienced traveler, and could say: *When I was in England*, etc. The dowagers in like manner would say to him: *You, who have been in England*, etc. He had been as far south as Lombardy and had seen the Italian lakes. He read all the new books. When he was cleaning his gloves, Babylas the tiger would say to callers: "Monsieur is at work." An attempt had been made to depreciate the young man by saying of him: "He is a man *of very advanced ideas*."—Amédée possessed a talent for uttering fashionable commonplaces with true Besançon gravity, whereby he obtained credit for being one of the most enlightened members of the nobility. He wore fashionable jewelry and his thoughts were guided by the press.

In 1834 Amédée was a young man of twenty-five, of medium height and dark complexion, chest tremendously expanded, shoulders thrown back in a corresponding degree, thighs somewhat rounded, a

foot already inclined to be fat, a white, plump hand, a fringe of beard, moustaches which rivaled those of the garrison, a fat, red, good-natured face, flat nose, brown eyes wholly devoid of expression; not a trace of his Spanish blood, by the way. He was progressing rapidly toward an obesity fatal to his pretensions. His nails were well cared for, his beard neatly brushed, the most trifling details of his dress looked after with the scrupulousness of an Englishman. So it was that Amédée de Soulas was considered to be the handsomest man in Besançon. A hairdresser, who came to curl his hair at a stated hour—another luxury at sixty francs a year!—extolled him as the sovereign arbiter of fashion and refinement. Amédée slept late, made his toilette, and rode out to one of his farms about noon to indulge in pistol-shooting. He devoted himself to that occupation as earnestly as Lord Byron did in his last days. Then he would return to the city about three o'clock, gazed at with admiring eyes as he rode along, by the grisettes and everybody who happened to be at their windows. After certain supposititious labors which were supposed to occupy his time until four o'clock, he would dress to dine out, and pass the evening playing whist in the salons of the Bisontine aristocracy; at eleven he went home and to bed. No man's life could be more open, more virtuous or more irreproachable, for he was scrupulously regular at religious services on Sundays and holy days.

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In order that you may understand what an abnormal existence this was, it is necessary to say a few words concerning the peculiarities of Besançon. No city offers a more obstinate, dogged resistance to progress. At Besançon the public officials, government clerks, soldiers, all those, in short, who are sent thither by the government or from Paris to occupy any position whatsoever, are designated as a whole by the expressive name of *the colony*. The colony is neutral ground, the only place where, as at church, the noble and the bourgeois society of the city can meet. Upon that neutral ground, arise from a word, a look or a gesture, enmities between family and family, between bourgeois women and women of noble birth, which last until death, and dig still deeper the impassable chasms by which the two divisions of society are separated. With the exception of the Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jeans, the Beauffremonts, the De Sceys, the Gramonts and some few others who lived only on their country estates in Franche-Comté, the Bisontine nobility dates back no more than two centuries, to the time of the conquest by Louis XIV. It is essentially a whig society, stiff-necked and solemn and dogmatic and haughty and arrogant to a degree surpassing even the court of Vienna, for in those qualities the Bisontines would put the Viennese salons to shame.

Of Victor Hugo, Nodier, Fourier, the glories of the city, even the names are never heard, nobody thinks about them. Marriages between noble families are arranged while the children are in their cradles, for the most trifling matters receive the same attention among them as those of the most serious importance. No stranger nor outsider has ever made his way into one of those houses, and not even titled colonels or other officers belonging to the best families in France—when there happen to be any such in the garrison—can gain admission there without diplomatic manœuvres that Prince de Talleyrand would have been very glad to know the secret of for use in a congress. In 1834 Amédée was the only man in Besançon who wore trouser-straps. This will explain young Monsieur de Soulas's *lionship*. A short anecdote will serve to give you a clear conception of Besançon.

Some little time before the day on which this story begins the prefecture found it necessary to send to Paris for an editor for its journal, in order to defend itself against the little *Gazette* which the great *Gazette* had set up there, and against the *Patriote* which was acting under the goad of the Republic. Paris sent down a young man who knew nothing about the Comté, and began operations with a leading article of the *Charivari* school. The leader of the government party, an official from the Hôtel-de-Ville, sent for the journalist and said to him:

"Understand, monsieur, that we are a serious

people here—yes, more than serious, stolid,—we don't want to be amused and we fly into a rage if we have to laugh. Be as hard to digest as the densest amplifications of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and you will hardly come up to the Bisontine standard."

The editor did not need a second hint, and talked philosophical patois impossible to understand. He made a complete success.

If young Monsieur de Soulas did not lose ground in the esteem of the salons of Besançon it was pure vanity on their part; the aristocracy was very glad to have the air of modernizing itself, and to be able to present to noble Parisians, traveling in the Comté, a young man who was almost like themselves. All this hidden toil, all this dust thrown in the eyes, this apparent folly, this latent sagacity, had an object, otherwise the Bisontine lion would not have remained in the province. Amédée desired to effect an advantageous match by proving some day that his farms were not mortgaged and that he had saved money. He desired to hold possession of the city, to be the comeliest and most fashionable man there, in order to secure first the attention, then the hand of Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville: ah!

In 1830, when young Monsieur de Soulas entered upon the profession of dandy, Rosalie was fourteen years old. In 1834, therefore, Mademoiselle de Watteville was approaching the age at which young persons are readily attracted by all the peculiarities which commended Amédée to the notice of the

city. There are many lions who become lions from selfish motives or as a speculation. The Watteville, who had enjoyed an income of fifty thousand francs for twelve years, spent no more than twenty-four thousand, although they entertained the best society of Besançon on Mondays and Fridays. On Mondays they gave a dinner-party, and on Fridays an evening-party. Think of the results of twenty-six thousand francs laid by every year for twelve years, and invested with the good judgment characteristic of those old families! It was universally believed that Madame de Watteville, considering that her investments in real estate were large enough, had put her savings into the three per cents in 1830. Rosalie's *dot* therefore should amount to about forty thousand francs a year. So for five years the lion had burrowed like a mole to get the upper hand of the strait-laced baroness's esteem, while maintaining an attitude calculated to flatter Mademoiselle de Watteville's self-love. The baroness was in the secret of the expedients by which Amédée succeeded in maintaining his position in Besançon, and esteemed him highly therefor. Soulas had taken his place beneath the baroness's wing when she was thirty years old,—he had then had the audacity to admire her and make her his idol; he had reached a point at which he could venture to tell her, and no other woman in the world, the free tone of conversation which almost all pious females love to listen to, being authorized by their transcendent virtue to gaze into abysses without falling in and to contemplate

the snares of the devil without getting caught therein. Do you understand why this lion did not permit himself to indulge in the slightest semblance of a love-affair? he kept his life clean and lived in the street, so to speak, in order that he might play the part of immolated lover for the baroness's benefit, and regale her mind with the sins she forbade her flesh to commit. A man who possesses the privilege of insinuating equivocal words in the ears of a devotee is a charming man in her eyes. If this exemplary lion had been more familiar with the workings of the human heart, he might without risk have permitted himself to indulge in some slight love-affairs among the grisettes of Besançon, who looked upon him as a king: his interests with the rigid, prudish baroness would have been advanced thereby. To Rosalie this Cato seemed a spendthrift; he professed to be devoted to a fashionable life, he described to her the existence of a society woman in Paris, whither he expected to go as a deputy. These skilful manœuvres were rewarded with complete success. In 1834, the mothers of the forty noble families which composed the cream of Besançon society pointed to young Monsieur Amédée de Soulas as the most delightful young man in the city; no one dared dispute the possession of that title with the cock of the walk at the De Rupt mansion, and all Besançon looked upon him as the future husband of Rosalie de Watteville. There had already been some words exchanged upon this subject between the baroness and Amédée—words

to which the baron's alleged insignificance imparted definiteness.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, whose fortune, destined some day to be enormous, made her a personage of considerable importance, had been brought up within the four walls of the De Rupt mansion,—which her mother rarely left, so fond was she of the dear archbishop,—and had been held in close restraint by an exclusively religious education and by the despotism of her mother, who kept a tight rein upon her from principle. Rosalie knew absolutely nothing. Does one know anything from having studied geography in Guthrie, sacred history, ancient history, the history of France and the four rules, all passed through the sieve of an old Jesuit? Drawing, music and dancing were prohibited, as being more likely to corrupt than to embellish life. The baroness taught her daughter everything it is possible to know about tapestry work and the petty occupations of the sex: sewing, knitting and crocheting. At seventeen Rosalie had read nothing but the *Lettres Édifiantes* and works upon heraldry. Never had a newspaper dishonored her glance. She heard mass every morning at the cathedral, where she went with her mother, returned to breakfast, worked in her room after a short walk in the garden, and sat beside the baroness, receiving callers until dinner time; after dinner, except on Mondays and Fridays, she accompanied Madame de Watteville to parties, where she could say nothing more than the maternal decree

permitted. At eighteen Mademoiselle de Watteville was a slender, frail, flat-breasted, light-haired, pale-faced girl of the utmost insignificance. Her pale blue eyes were enlivened by the play of the eyelids, which cast a shadow on her cheeks when she looked down. A few freckles marred the purity of her well-shaped brow. Her face was exactly like the faces of saints drawn by Albert Dürer and the painters before Perugino: the same round, yet finely drawn outline, the same delicacy of feature, saddened by religious ecstasy, the same solemn innocence. Everything about her, even to her attitude, reminded one of the virgins whose beauty in all its mystic splendor is apparent only to the eyes of a careful connoisseur. Her hands were beautifully shaped, but red, and she had the loveliest foot, a real chatelaine's foot. Ordinarily she wore simple cotton dresses; but on Sundays and holidays her mother allowed her to wear silk. Her dresses, all made in Besançon, made her almost ugly; while her mother tried to borrow grace and beauty and style from the fashions of Paris, whence she procured the smallest details of her toilette by availing herself of the services of young Monsieur de Soulas. Rosalie had never worn silk stockings or laced boots, only cotton stockings and leather shoes. On gala days she was arrayed in a muslin gown, with bronzed leather shoes, and with no ornaments in her hair. Her education and her modest bearing concealed a character of iron. Physiologists and all profound observers of human nature will tell you, to your

great astonishment perhaps, that, in families, peculiarities of temperament and character, genius, intellectual qualities, reappear at long intervals exactly the same as what are called hereditary diseases. Thus talent, like the gout, sometimes skips two generations. We have a notable instance of this phenomenon in the case of George Sand, in whom mental force, the will and the imagination of Marshal Saxe, whose natural granddaughter she is, seem to live again. The peremptory disposition, the romantic audacity of the famous De Watteville were reproduced in the person of this grandniece, augmented by the tenacity and indomitable pride of the De Rupt blood. But these qualities—defects, if you choose—were as deeply hidden in the girl's seemingly pliable and feeble mind, as the boiling lava in the bowels of a mountain before it becomes a volcano. Madame de Watteville alone may have had a suspicion of this legacy of the two bloods. She was so harsh to her Rosalie that one day, when the archbishop reproved her for treating her so cruelly, she replied:

"Let me manage her, monseigneur; I know her! she has more than one Beelzebub in her skin!"

The baroness watched her daughter the more closely because she thought her own reputation as a mother was at stake. Indeed there was nothing else for her to do. Clotilde de Rupt, then thirty-five years of age, and almost the widow of a husband who turned egg-cups in all sorts of wood, who was mad on the subject of making iron-wood circles

with six radii, who made snuff-boxes for his friends, was flirting in good earnest with Amédée de Soulas. When that young man was in the house she would send her daughter away and call her back time after time, trying to detect indications of jealousy in her young heart, so that she might have an opportunity to suppress them. She imitated the police in its relations with the Republicans; but it was all in vain, for Rosalie betrayed no symptoms of rebellion. Thereupon the austere devotee reproved her daughter for her utter insensibility. Rosalie knew her mother well enough to be sure that if she had found young Monsieur de Soulas *to her liking*, she would have drawn down a sharp rebuke upon her own head. And so, to all her mother's turmoils she replied by some of those phrases so inappropriately called jesuitical, for the Jesuits were men of strong character, and this sort of dissimulation is the breastwork behind which weakness seeks shelter. The mother therefore treated her daughter as an artful minx. If unhappily a gleam of the real character of the Wattevilles and De Rupts happened to break through the clouds, the mother made use of the respect children owe their parents as a weapon to reduce Rosalie to passive obedience. This secret combat was waged in the most retired precincts of private life, behind closed doors. The vicar-general, the dear Abbé de Grancey, the friend of the defunct archbishop, great as was his power as grand-penitentiary of the diocese, was unable to divine whether this struggle had given birth to a

feeling of hatred between the mother and daughter, whether the mother was jealous in anticipation, or whether the attention Amédée was paying the young woman in her mother's person had gone beyond bounds. In his capacity of friend of the family he was neither the mother's confessor nor the daughter's. Rosalie, who had been somewhat overwhipped, morally speaking, apropos of young Monsieur de Soulas, could not bear him, to use a familiar expression. And so, when he spoke to her, attempting to take her heart by surprise, she always received him very coldly. This repugnance, visible to no eye but her mother's, was a constant subject of admonition.

"Rosalie, I don't see why you pretend to be so indifferent to Amédée; is it because he's a friend of the family, and because *your father* and I are fond of him?"

"Why! mamma," the poor child retorted one day, "if I received him pleasantly I should be even more to blame, shouldn't I?"

"What does this mean?" cried Madame de Watteville. "What do you mean by saying such things? Your mother is unjust, perhaps, and according to you, she would be unjust in all cases! Never allow your lips to make such an answer to your mother!" —etc.

This quarrel lasted three hours and three-quarters, and Rosalie called attention to that fact. Her mother turned pale with rage, and sent the girl to her room, where she puzzled over the meaning of

the episode, but could make nothing of it, so innocent was she! So young Monsieur de Soulas, who was believed by all Besançon to be very near the goal toward which he was journeying with flowing cravats, aided by jars of varnish, and which caused him to use so much black wax for his moustaches, so many pretty waistcoats, horseshoes and corsets —for he wore a leather vest, the lion's corset;— Amédée, we say, was farther from it than the first chance comer, although he had the dignified and noble Abbé de Grancey on his side. Moreover, Rosalie did not know, at the moment when this narrative begins, that young Comte Amédée de Soulas was her destined spouse.

*

"Madame," said Monsieur de Soulas, addressing the baroness while the guests were waiting for the hot soup to cool, and attempting to impart a flavor of romance to his story, "one fine morning the mail-coach deposited at the Hotel National a gentleman from Paris, who, after looking about in search of apartments finally decided upon Mademoiselle Galard's first floor, Rue du Perron. The *foreigner* then went straight to the mayor's office to deposit a declaration of his purpose to make Besançon his domicile for all purposes. Finally he caused his name to be entered on the roll of advocates of the royal court upon presenting his credentials duly authenticated, and he left a card with all his new brethren of the profession, the government officials, the councilors of the court, and all the members of the tribunal,—a card on which were the words: ALBERT SAVARON."

"The name of Savaron is a famous one," said Rosalie, who was very strong in heraldic knowledge. "The Savarons of Savarus are one of the most ancient, noble and wealthy families in Belgium."

"He is a Frenchman and a poet," replied Amédée de Soulas. "If he wants to adopt the crest of the Savarons of Savarus he must put a bar across it. There is but one Savarus left in Brabant, a wealthy heiress of marriageable age."

"The bar is a sign of illegitimacy, of course, but the bastard of a Comte de Savarus is a noble," rejoined Mademoiselle de Watteville.

"Enough, Rosalie!" said the baroness.

"You wanted her to know about heraldry," said the baron, "and she knows all about it."

"Go on, Amédée."

"You understand that in a city where everyone is classified, known, dissected, boxed up, labeled, numbered, as in Besançon, Albert Savaron was received by our advocates without any difficulty. Everyone was satisfied when he had said: 'Here's a poor devil who doesn't know his Besançon. Who the devil could have advised him to come here? what does he expect to do here? The idea of sending his card to the magistrates instead of calling on them in person—what a blunder!' And so after three days no more was heard of Savaron. He took for his servant the late Monsieur Galard's valet, Jérôme, who can cook a little. It has been all the easier to forget Albert Savaron, because no one has seen him or met him."

"Pray, doesn't he go to mass?" said Madame de Chavoncourt.

"He goes to Saint-Pierre on Sunday, but to the first mass, at eight o'clock. He gets up every night between one and two o'clock, works till eight, breakfasts, and then works again. He walks fifty or sixty times around his garden, returns to the house, dines, and goes to bed between six and seven."

"How do you know all this?" Madame de Chavoncourt asked Monsieur de Soulas.

"In the first place, madame, I live on Rue Neuve, at the corner of Rue du Perron, and my rooms overlook the house where this mysterious individual lodges; then, my tiger and Jérôme are in the habit of exchanging ideas."

"So you talk with Babylas, do you?"

"What do you expect me to do when I'm out driving?"

"Well, how came you to take a stranger for your advocate?" said the baroness, thus restoring the conversation to the vicar-general.

"The first president played this man the trick of appointing him to defend at the assizes a half-witted peasant, accused of forgery. Monsieur Savaron procured the poor fellow's acquittal by establishing his innocence and proving that he was merely the tool of the real culprits. Not only did his system of defense prevail, but he necessitated the arrest of two of the witnesses, who, being proved guilty, were convicted and sentenced. His argument made a great impression on the court and jury. One of the latter, a merchant, placed a suit of his own, involving a very nice question, in Monsieur Savaron's hands the next day, and he won it. In the plight in which we were left by the impossibility of Monsieur Berryer's coming to Besançon, Monsieur de Garcenault advised us to retain this Monsieur Albert Savaron, predicting a successful result. As soon as I saw and heard him, I

felt perfect confidence in him, and I made no mistake."

"Is there anything so extraordinary about him?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Yes," was the vicar-general's reply.

"Very well, tell us about it," said Madame de Watteville.

"The first time I saw him," said the Abbé de Grancey, "he received me in the room next the reception-room—Goodman Galard's salon—which he has had painted like old oak, and the walls of which are lined with law-books in bookcases painted like the woodwork. The painted wainscoting and the books are the only things that smack of luxury, for the furniture consists of an old carved wooden desk, six old chairs covered with tapestry, carmelite-colored window curtains, bordered with green, and a green carpet on the floor. The stove in the reception-room heats this library as well. As I waited, I did not think of my advocate as a man with youthful features. That strange frame was quite in harmony with the picture it enclosed, for Monsieur Savaron appeared in a black merino dressing-gown, gathered in at the waist by a girdle of red cord, red slippers, a red flannel waistcoat and a red cap."

"The devil's livery!" cried Madame de Watteville.

"True," said the abbé, "but a superb head; black hair with some few white hairs already sprinkled through it—hair such as the St. Peters and St. Pauls

have in our pictures, thick and glossy, coarse as horsehair—a neck white and round as a woman's, a magnificent forehead divided by the furrow which great projects, great thoughts, profound meditation imprint upon great men's foreheads; olive complexion with spots of red, square nose, eyes of fire, hollow cheeks marked by two long wrinkles eloquent of suffering, mouth curled in a sardonic smile, small chin, a little too short and very thin; he has the mark of the crow's foot on his temples, sunken eyes rolling about under the arches of the eyebrows like two glowing balls; but, despite all these indications of violent passion, his bearing is profoundly calm and resigned, his voice of a penetrating sweetness which surprised me at the Palais by its varied modulations—the voice of a born orator, now smooth and cunning, now plausible and insinuating, speaking in tones of thunder when occasion required, adapting itself to sarcasm, and anon becoming sharp and incisive. Monsieur Albert Savaron is of middle height, neither stout nor thin. He has the hands of a prelate. The second time I called upon him he received me in his bedroom adjoining the library, and smiled at my amazement when I saw there a wretched commode, a villainous carpet, a cot-bed and calico curtains at the windows. He came out of his office, to which no one is ever admitted, so Jérôme told me, who never goes in himself, but simply knocks at the door. Monsieur Savaron himself turned the key in the door before my eyes. The third time he was breakfasting most frugally

in his library; but that time, as he had passed the night examining our documents, when our solicitor was with me, as our interview was likely to be a long one, and as dear Monsieur Girardet is long-winded, I had an opportunity to make a study of this stranger to Besançon. Certainly he is no ordinary man. There are more secrets than one hidden behind that mask, terrible at once and gentle, patient and impatient, well-rounded and deeply furrowed. I noticed that he was slightly bent like all men who have a heavy burden to carry."

"Why did this eloquent man leave Paris? What was his purpose in coming to Besançon? Did nobody tell him how little chance strangers had of succeeding here? They will make use of him, but the Bisontins will never let him make use of them. As long as he did come here, why has he spent so little money, why did it require the first president's whim to bring him into notice?" said lovely Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Having made a careful study of that handsome head," replied Abbé de Grancey, with a shrewd glance at his interrupter, giving the impression that he was keeping something back,—"and more especially after hearing him reply this morning to one of the eagles of the Paris bar, it is my opinion that this man, who is apparently about thirty-five years old, will make a great sensation some day.—"

"Why do we trouble our heads about him? Your suit is won and you have paid him," said Madame de Watteville, with her eye on her daughter, who

had been, as it were, hanging on the vicar-general's lips, all the time he was speaking.

The conversation thereupon took another direction and nothing more was said about Albert Savaron.

The portrait drawn by the most enlightened of the vicars-general of the diocese had so much the more attraction of a romance for Rosalie since it had the savor of romance about it. For the first time in her life she found herself face to face with the extraordinary, the marvelous, on which all youthful imaginations love to dwell, and which curiosity, so ardent at Rosalie's age, rushes forth to meet. What an ideal creature was this Albert, dark-browed, suffering, eloquent, hard-working, when contrasted by Mademoiselle de Watteville with yonder vulgar, fat-faced count, bursting with health, who talked amorous nonsense, and prated of fashion in face of the splendor of the ancient Comtes de Rupt! Amédée was simply the occasion of quarrels and reproaches, moreover, she knew him only too well, whereas this Albert Savaron offered many enigmas for solution.

"Albert Savaron de Savarus," she repeated to herself.

Oh! to see him, to catch a glimpse of him!—That was the longing of a young heart that had hitherto known no longing. She reviewed in her heart, in her imagination, in her brain, the most trivial words let fall by Abbé de Grancey, for every word had struck home.

"A fine forehead," she said to herself, looking at

the forehead of every man seated at the table, "I don't see a single fine one here—Monsieur de Soulas's bulges too much, Monsieur de Grancey's is fine, but he's seventy years old and hasn't any hair, so you can't tell where the forehead ends."

"What's the matter, Rosalie? you're not eating."

"I'm not hungry, mamma," said she.—"The hands of a prelate,"—she continued, mentally, "I don't remember our dear archbishop's hands, although he confirmed me."

At last, as she was still wandering hither and thither in the labyrinth of her reverie, she remembered that, when she happened to wake during the night, she had noticed from her bed a lighted window shining through the trees of the two adjoining gardens.

"That must have been his light," she said to herself; "I may be able to see him! I will see him!"

"Monsieur de Grancey, is the suit against the chapter entirely finished?" Rosalie suddenly asked the vicar-general during a momentary lull in the conversation.

Madame de Watteville exchanged a swift glance with the vicar-general.

"Of what consequence is it to you, my dear child?" she said to Rosalie, assuming a softness of manner which put her daughter on her guard for the rest of her days.

"They may take us up to the Court of Appeals; but our opponents will think twice before they do that," the abbé replied.

"I wouldn't have believed that Rosalie could think about a law-suit during a whole dinner," rejoined Madame de Watteville.

"Nor would I," said Rosalie with a dreamy expression which called forth a laugh. "But Monsieur de Grancey was so engrossed by it, that I got interested in it too. It's very innocent!"

They left the table and returned to the salon. Throughout the evening Rosalie listened for anything more that might be said about Albert Savaron; but, aside from the congratulations every new arrival offered the abbé upon the result of the suit, which did not include any eulogiums upon the advocate, he was not mentioned. Mademoiselle de Watteville impatiently awaited the coming of night. She had promised herself to get up between two and three o'clock in the morning and look at the windows of Albert's study. When that hour arrived she experienced something very like pleasure in gazing at the light cast by the advocate's candles through the trees which were almost denuded of their leaves. By means of the excellent eyesight possessed by young girls, and which curiosity seems to improve, she saw Albert writing and thought she could distinguish the color of the furnishings, which seemed to her to be red. A thick column of smoke ascended from the chimney.

"When all the world is sleeping, he is awake—like God!" she said to herself.

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The education of girls involves such serious problems—for the future of a nation depends upon its mothers—that the University of France long ago set itself the task of paying no attention thereto. This is one of the problems. Should young girls be fully enlightened? should their intelligence be restricted? It need not be said that the religious system is one of restriction: if you enlighten their minds you make devils of them prematurely; if you prevent them from thinking you bring about the sudden explosion so well depicted in Molière's character of *Agnes*, and you place the restricted mind, so strange to everything, so perspicacious, and as swift to think and draw conclusions as the mind of a savage, at the mercy of an accident—an ominous crisis, brought about in Mademoiselle de Watteville's case by the injudicious sketch which one of the most judicious abbés of the judicious chapter of Besançon permitted himself to draw at the dinner-table.

The next morning Mademoiselle de Watteville, as she was dressing, was irresistibly impelled to gaze at Albert Savaron walking in the garden adjoining that of the De Rupt mansion.

"What would have become of me," she said to herself, "if he had lived elsewhere? I can see him. What is he thinking about?"

After she had seen, though at a distance, this extraordinary man, the only one whose face stood prominently forth from the mass of Bisontine faces she had hitherto seen, Rosalie leaped quickly to the thought of making her way into his apartments, of finding out the motive of all this mystery, of hearing that eloquent voice, of receiving a glance from those beautiful eyes. She longed to do all that, but how could she gratify her longing?

Throughout the whole day she drew her needle in and out of her embroidery with that dogged attention of the maiden who seems, like Agnes, to be thinking of nothing, but who is thinking so deeply of everything that her wiles cannot fail to deceive. The result of this deep meditation on Rosalie's part was a longing to confess. The next morning, after mass, she had a brief conference with Père Giroud at Nôtre-Dame, and cajoled him so completely that he agreed to hear her confession on Sunday morning at half-past seven, before the eight o'clock mass. She told a dozen lies in order that she might be able to be at the church, just once, at the hour when the advocate attended mass. Finally she was seized with a paroxysm of violent affection for her father, went to see him in his workshop and asked him innumerable questions about the wood-turner's art, in order to make an opportunity to advise him to turn large pieces—columns, for instance. Having started her father on the subject of twisted columns, one of the stumbling-blocks in the turner's profession, she advised him to take advantage of a

pile of stones lying in the middle of the garden to have a grotto built, and in it he could place a little temple after the style of a *belvedere*, in which his twisted columns could be introduced and dazzle the eyes of his whole circle of acquaintances.

In the midst of the delight which this suggestion afforded the poor man, on whose hands time hung so heavily, Rosalie kissed him and said:

"Above all things, don't tell mother where you got this idea; she'd scold me well."

"Never fear," replied Monsieur de Watteville, who groaned as bitterly as his daughter under the oppression of the terrible daughter of the De Rupts.

Thus, Rosalie was certain that she should soon see a charming observatory erected in the garden, from which her eyes could pierce the seclusion of the advocate's office. And there are men for whom young girls achieve such masterpieces of diplomacy, and for the most part, like Albert Savaron, they know nothing of it.

The Sunday, so impatiently awaited, came at last, and Rosalie's toilette was made with an attention which brought a smile to the lips of Mariette, Madame and Mademoiselle de Watteville's maid.

"This is the first time I ever saw Mademoiselle so particular!" said Mariette.

"You remind me," said Rosalie, darting a glance at Mariette that brought the poppies to her cheeks, "that there are days when you are more so than on others.

As she left the doorsteps, crossed the courtyard,

passed through the gate and walked along the street, Rosalie's heart beat as violently as our hearts beat when we have a presentiment of some momentous event. She did not know until that moment what it was to walk through the streets: she had thought that her mother would read her project in her face and forbid her to go to confession; she felt a fresh current of blood flowing through her feet and lifted them as if she were walking in fire! She had naturally made the appointment with her confessor for quarter-past eight, and had told her mother eight o'clock, so that she might have a quarter of an hour to wait beside Albert. She reached the church before mass was said, and after repeating a short prayer, she went to see if Abbé Giroud was in his confessional, simply as an excuse for sauntering through the church. In this way she took up a position from which she could see Albert the moment he entered.

A man must be atrociously ugly in order not to appear handsome to a young woman in the frame of mind to which Mademoiselle de Watteville's curiosity had brought her. Now Albert Savaron, who was a man certain to attract attention under any circumstances, made all the deeper impression upon Rosalie because his bearing, his gait, his attitude, everything about him, even to his clothing, had that indefinable something which can only be expressed by the word *mysterious!* He entered. The church, until that moment gloomy, seemed to Rosalie brilliantly lighted. The girl was fascinated by

his slow, almost solemn step, as of a man who carries a world on his shoulders, and whose penetrating glance, whose movements, agree in giving expression to a thought of destruction or of domination. Rosalie at that moment fully understood the meaning of the vicar-general's words: yes, those yellowish-brown eyes, diversified with threads of gold, veiled an ardent temperament that betrayed itself by sudden flashes. Rosalie, with an imprudence which did not pass unnoticed by Mariette, placed herself in the advocate's path in such a way as to exchange a glance with him; and that glance, sought by her, changed the current of her blood, which foamed and boiled as if its heat were increased twofold. As soon as Albert was seated, Mademoiselle de Watteville selected her own position so that she had an unobstructed view of him during all the time Abbé Giroud allowed her. When Mariette said: "There's Monsieur Giroud," it seemed to Rosalie as if it had been but a few moments. When she came out of the confessional, the mass was at an end and Albert had left the church.

"The vicar-general was right," she thought; "*he* is suffering! Why did that eagle—for he has an eagle's eyes—swoop down upon Besançon? Oh! I must find out everything—And how?"

Under the impulsion of this new desire, Rosalie drew the threads of her embroidery with admirable precision, and veiled her meditations behind a demure air, feigning simplicity so successfully that

Madame de Watteville was deceived. After the Sunday on which Mademoiselle de Watteville received that glance, or if you prefer, that baptism of fire—a magnificent expression of Napoléon's which love may make use of—she pushed on the affair of the *belvedere* with great earnestness.

"Mamma," said she, when there were two columns all turned, "father has taken a strange notion into his head; he is turning columns for a belvedere he proposes to build, making use of that pile of stones in the middle of the garden; do you approve of it? For my part, it seems to me that—"

"I approve of whatever your father does," replied Madame de Watteville dryly, "and it's a wife's duty to submit to her husband, even if she doesn't approve of his ideas.—Why should I oppose a thing of no consequence in itself, as soon as I find that it amuses Monsieur de Watteville?"

"But, from there we can look into Monsieur de Soulas's house, and Monsieur de Soulas can see us when we're there. Perhaps people would talk—"

"Do you undertake to guide your parents, Rosalie, and to know more than they about life and about what is or is not proper?"

"I have no more to say, mamma. However, father says that the grotto will be a room where we can go and take our coffee in the open air."

"It's an excellent idea of your father's," replied Madame de Watteville, and she determined to go and see the columns.

She bestowed her approbation upon Baron de

Watteville's project, selecting for the location of the structure a point at the end of the garden, where there was no opportunity to look into Monsieur de Soulas's quarters, but where they had an admirable view of the domicile of Monsieur Albert Savaron. A contractor was called in, who undertook to construct a grotto with a little path three feet wide leading to the summit; in the crevices between the stones periwinkles would grow, and the iris, viburnum, ivy, honeysuckle and creeper. The baroness conceived the idea of covering the interior walls of the grotto with rustic woodwork then much in vogue for jardinières, of placing a mirror at one end with a covered divan and a marquetry table composed of bark. Monsieur de Soulas suggested covering the floor with asphalt. Rosalie proposed a chandelier in rustic woodwork suspended from the roof.

"The Wattevilles are putting up a fascinating little thing in their garden," people said in Besançon.

"They are rich, they can afford to spend a thousand crowns for a whim."

"A thousand crowns?"—said Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Yes, a thousand crowns," cried young Monsieur de Soulas. "They have sent for a man from Paris to do the interior rustic work, and it will be very pretty. Monsieur de Watteville makes the chandelier, and he's beginning to carve the wood—"

"They say Berquet's going to dig a cellar," said an abbé.

"No," replied Monsieur de Soulas, "he is to set the kiosk on a foundation of solid masonry, so that there may be no dampness."

"You know every little thing that goes on in that house," said Madame de Chavoncourt sourly, glancing at her three tall daughters, all of marriageable age for a year past.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who had some slight feeling of pride as she thought of the success of her belvedere, reached the conclusion that she was eminently superior to all those about her. No one imagined that a slip of a girl, supposed to have no mind of her own and to be almost an idiot, had simply determined to see the advocate Savaron's office at shorter range.

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Albert Savaron's brilliant argument in behalf of the Cathedral Chapter was the more speedily forgotten in that the jealousy of the other advocates was aroused. Moreover, Savaron was faithful to his purpose of living in retirement—and was seen nowhere. As he had no trumpeters and saw no one, he increased his chance of being forgotten, a chance which is sufficiently great for any stranger, in a city like Besançon. Nevertheless, he pleaded three times before the Tribunal of Commerce in three complicated cases which were destined to go up to the royal court. His clients were four substantial merchants of the city, who discovered in him such a fund of common sense and of what is called in the provinces *judicial instinct,* that they entrusted their affairs in litigation to him. On the day when the Watteville family dedicated their belvedere, Savaron likewise reared his monument. Thanks to his secret relations with the leading commercial houses of Besançon, he founded a fortnightly review called the *Revue de l'Est,* with a capital of forty shares of five hundred francs each, placed in the hands of his first ten clients, upon whom he urged the necessity of assisting to guide the destinies of Besançon, the city which should be the trading centre between Mülhausen and Lyons, the most important point between the Rhine and the Rhone.

To enter into rivalry with Strasburg, should not Besançon be a centre of enlightenment as well as a commercial centre? Nowhere else than in a review could the momentous questions bearing upon the interests of the East be properly dealt with. What a glorious thing it would be to wrest from Strasburg and Dijon their literary influence, to spread enlightenment through the East of France and contend against Parisian centralization! These arguments, supplied by Albert, were echoed by the ten merchants, who gave themselves credit for them.

Savaron the advocate did not make the mistake of putting his own name forward; he left the financial management in the hands of his first client, Monsieur Boucher, who was connected by marriage with one of the leading publishers of important ecclesiastical works; but he reserved the editorship for himself, with a share in the profits as one of the founders. The business interests issued an appeal at Dôle, Dijon, Salins, Neufchâtel, the Jura, Bourg, Nantua, Lons-le-Saunier. They demanded the cooperation of the knowledge and efforts of all thoughtful men in the three provinces of Bugey, Besse and Franche-Comté. Thanks to the business connections and social relations of the founders, a hundred and fifty subscriptions were taken, some credit being due to the low subscription price: the *Revue* cost eight francs per quarter. To avoid wounding the provincial self-esteem by declining contributed articles, the advocate was clever enough to awaken an ambition to undertake the literary editorship of

the *Revue* in the breast of Monsieur Boucher's eldest son, a young man of twenty-two, thirsty for renown, to whom the pitfalls and vexations of literary management were entirely unknown. Albert secretly retained control and made of Alfred Boucher his fanatical adherent. Alfred was the only person in Besançon with whom the king of the bar fraternized. Alfred came in the morning to confer with Albert in the garden concerning the details of the next number. It is needless to say that the initial number contained a *Meditation* by Alfred, which received Savaron's approval. In his conversation with Alfred, Albert let fall grand ideas, subjects for articles of which young Boucher was not slow to avail himself. So the merchant's son believed that he was making use of the great man! In Alfred's eyes, Albert was a man of genius, a profound politician. The merchants were delighted with the success of the *Revue*, for they had to pay up only three-tenths of the value of their shares. Two hundred subscribers more and the *Revue* would pay a dividend of five per cent to its shareholders; the editing not being paid for. Indeed the editing was beyond price. When the third number was issued the *Revue* had made arrangements for exchanging with all the newspapers in France, which Albert read at home. This third number contained a novel signed A. S., and attributed to the famous advocate. Although the first society of Besançon condescended to take but little notice of the *Revue*, which was accused of liberalism, this first novel that had ever

blossomed in the Comté was the subject of discussion at Madame de Chavoncourt's in the middle of the winter.

"Father," said Rosalie, "there's a review published here in Besançon; you must subscribe for it and keep it in your own rooms, for mamma wouldn't let me read it; but you will lend it to me."

Eager to obey his dear Rosalie, who had been lavish of proofs of her affection for him for five months past, Monsieur de Watteville went himself to subscribe to the *Revue de l'Est* for a year, and loaned his daughter the four numbers that had appeared. During the night Rosalie was at liberty to devour the novel, the first she had ever read in her life; but she had not known what it was to live until the last two months! We must not therefore judge the effect this work was likely to produce upon her, by ordinary rules. Entirely aside from the question of the greater or less merit of this composition, the work of a Parisian who brought with him into the province the manner, the brilliancy, if you choose, of the new literary school, it could not fail to be a masterpiece in the eyes of a young woman devoting her virgin intelligence, her pure heart, to a work of this sort for the first time. Moreover, from what she had heard of the book Rosalie had, by intuition, formed an idea of her own regarding it, which increased its value to a remarkable degree. She hoped to find therein the sentiments and perhaps something of the life of Albert. From the very first page this idea became so firmly fixed

in her mind, that when she had read the fragment through, she felt sure that she was not mistaken. We insert here this confidential production, wherein, according to the critics of the Chavoncourt salon, Albert copied some modern writers, who through lack of the inventive faculty, describe their own joys, their own sorrows or the mysterious occurrences of their own lives:

Ambitious Through Love.

In 1823, two young men, who had agreed to take a ramble through Switzerland in company, set out from Lucerne one fine morning in July, in a boat propelled by three rowers, and started for Fluelen, proposing to stop at all the famous places on the Lake of Lucerne. The landscapes which border the lake from Lucerne to Fluelen present all the combinations the most exacting imagination can demand of mountains and rivers, lakes and cliffs, streams and verdure, trees and mountain torrents. There is a succession of frowning solitudes and graceful headlands, fresh and smiling valleys, forests perched like plumes on the summit of perpendicular cliffs, cool, solitary bays that open before one, valleys whose treasures are embellished by the uncertain distance.

As they passed the charming little village of Gersau, one of the two friends gazed long at a wooden house, apparently of recent construction, surrounded by a fence, situated on a headland and almost

bathed by the water beneath. As the boat passed, a woman's head appeared in a room on the upper floor of the house, to enjoy the effect of the boat upon the water. One of the young men received the glance directed at him with utter indifference by the unknown.

"Let us stop here," he said to his friend; "we intended to make Lucerne our headquarters while we are in Switzerland, but you won't take it amiss, Léopold, if I change my opinion and stay here to look after the cloaks. You can do whatever you please; for my part, my journey's at an end. Pull ashore, boys, and set us down at this village; we're going to have luncheon here. I'll go and send a messenger to Lucerne for all our luggage, and you shall know before you go what house I shall take up my quarters in, so that you can find me when you return."

"Between this and Lucerne," said Léopold, "there's not enough difference for me to interfere with your gratifying a whim."

These two young men were friends in the truest acceptation of the word. They were of the same age, they had pursued their studies at the same college; and, having finished their legal studies, they were passing their vacation in the classic tour through Switzerland. As the result of a desire on his father's part, Léopold was already engaged to enter the office of a notary in Paris. His sense of rectitude, his gentle disposition, the inexcitability of his emotions and his intelligence guaranteed his

docility. Léopold looked forward to being a notary of Paris: his life lay before him like one of the broad roads which traverse a level tract of France; he surveyed it in all its extent with philosophical resignation.

The character of his companion, whom we will call Rodolphe, presented a striking contrast to his, and the result of this antagonism had doubtless been to draw still tighter the bond that united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a great nobleman, who died suddenly and prematurely before he had an opportunity to provide the means of subsistence for a woman whom he loved dearly and for Rodolphe. Thus betrayed by a caprice of fate, Rodolphe's mother had recourse to an heroic expedient. She sold everything that she owed to the generosity of her child's father, got together something over a hundred thousand francs, purchased with it an annuity for her own life at a high rate of interest, and in this way procured an income of about fifteen thousand francs, resolving to sacrifice everything to her son's education in order to provide him with the personal advantages best adapted to assist him in making his fortune, and by strict economy to lay by a little capital for him when he attained his majority. It was a bold step, it was making everything depend upon her own life; but, if she had been less bold, it would have been impossible without doubt for the good mother to live, and to provide a proper education for her child, her only hope, her future and her only source of happiness. Born of one of the most

fascinating of Parisian women, and of a noteworthy figure in the aristocracy of Brabant, the fruit of an ardent, mutual passion, Rodolphe was afflicted with extreme sensitiveness. From his infancy he had exhibited the greatest ardor in everything.

In him, desire became an overpowering force, the motive power of his whole being, a stimulant to his imagination, the basis of all his acts. Despite the efforts of an intelligent mother, who took alarm the moment she observed this predisposition, Rodolphe desired this or that as a poet exercises his imagination, as a scholar reasons, as a painter draws, as a musician sketches the outline of a melody. As affectionate as his mother, in his thoughts he darted in pursuit of the desired object with incredible vehemence; he annihilated time. When dreaming of the accomplishment of his projects he always suppressed the means of execution.

"If my son has children," his mother would say, "he will want them to be grown-up instantly."

This praiseworthy ardor, properly guided, assisted Rodolphe to go through his college course with great brilliancy, and to become what the English call a perfect gentleman. His mother was very proud of him, therefore, although she was in constant dread of some catastrophe if ever passion should take possession of that heart, at once so tender and so sensitive, so kind and so violent. For that reason the prudent creature had encouraged the friendship that bound Léopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Léopold, looking upon the unemotional and conscientious

notary as a mentor, a confidant, who could, to a certain extent, fill her place with Rodolphe, if she should, by any evil chance, be taken from him. Still lovely at forty-three, Rodolphe's mother had inspired the warmest passion in Léopold's heart. This fact served to make the two young men even more intimate.

Léopold, who knew Rodolphe well, was not surprised to find him stopping short at a village and abandoning the projected excursion to the Saint-Gothard,—all on account of a glance shot at him from a housetop. While their lunch was being made ready at the hostelry of *Le Cygne,* the two friends made a circuit of the village, and came finally to the neighborhood of the fascinating newly-built house, and there Rodolphe, by dint of sauntering about and talking with the natives, discovered a house belonging to a small storekeeper, who was inclined to take him in as a boarder, in accordance with the prevailing custom in Switzerland. They offered him a room looking on the lake and the mountains, which commanded a magnificent view of one of the marvelous panoramas that commend the Lake of the Forest Cantons to the admiration of tourists. This house was separated by a street and a small gate from the new house where Rodolphe had caught a glimpse of his fair unknown's face.

For a hundred francs a month, Rodolphe was relieved of the necessity of providing the necessaries of life. But, in consideration of the expense that the Stopfers expected to incur, they demanded

payment for the third month in advance.—Scratch a Swiss ever so little and you find a usurer.—After lunch Rodolphe immediately took possession by depositing in his room all that he had brought in the way of luggage for his excursion to the Saint-Gothard, and watched the departure of Léopold, who, impelled by his orderly instinct, proposed to go through with the excursion on Rodolphe's behalf as well as his own. When Rodolphe, sitting on a rock that had fallen by the water's edge, could no longer see Léopold's boat, he scrutinized the new house out of the corner of his eye, hoping to catch a glimpse of the unknown. Alas! he returned to his room without having detected a sign of life about the house. While he was discussing the dinner provided by Monsieur and Madame Stopfer, formerly coopers at Neufchâtel, he questioned them about the neighborhood, and succeeded in learning all that he desired to know concerning the unknown, thanks to the garrulity of his hosts, who emptied their bag of gossip without waiting to be urged.

The name of the unknown was Fanny Lovelace. This name, which is pronounced *Loveless,* is borne by various old English families, but Richardson has created a character by that name, whose celebrity casts all others into the shade. Miss Lovelace had taken up her abode on the lake for the benefit of her father's health, the doctors having prescribed the air of the canton of Lucerne for him. The father and daughter, who had no servant save a little girl of fourteen, a dumb child who was deeply attached

to Miss Fanny and served her intelligently, had made their arrangements the preceding winter with Monsieur and Madame Bergmann, formerly head gardeners to his Excellency Count Borromeo at *Isola Bella* and *Isola Madre* on Lago Maggiore. These Swiss, who had an income of about a thousand crowns, let the upper floor of their house to the Lovelaces for two hundred francs a year for three years. Old Lovelace, a decrepit nonagenarian, too poor to indulge in any considerable expense, rarely left the house; his daughter supported them by translating English books, it was said, and by writing books herself. So it was that the Lovelaces did not dare to hire boats to row on the lake, or horses or guides to visit the points of interest in the neighborhood. Poverty that demands such sacrifices excites the more compassion among the Swiss in that they lose thereby an opportunity for profit. The cook of the household supplied the three English with food for a hundred francs a month, everything included. But all Gersau believed that the quondam gardeners, notwithstanding their pretensions to bourgeois rank, shielded themselves behind the cook's name in order to realize the profits of this bargain. The Bergmanns had laid out beautiful gardens and built a magnificent greenhouse about their abode. The flowers and fruits and botanical rareties to be found there had guided the young lady in her choice of a boarding-place when they passed through Gersau. Miss Fanny was nineteen years old, they said, and, being the old man's last

remaining child, was worshiped by him. Not more than two months before, she had succeeded in hiring a piano at Lucerne, for she seemed music-mad.

"She loves flowers and music," Rodolphe thought, "and she is unmarried. What good fortune!"

The next day Rodolphe sent to ask permission to visit the greenhouses and gardens, which were beginning to enjoy some celebrity. This permission was not at once granted. The quondam gardeners requested, strangely enough, to see Rodolphe's passport, and he sent it instantly. The passport was not returned to him until the following day, when the cook brought it to him and informed him how delighted her masters would be to show him their establishment. Rodolphe did not go to the Bergmann's house without a certain internal commotion which only people of keen emotions know, who display as much passion in a single moment as some men expend in their whole lives. Dressed with care, in order to make a pleasant impression upon the former gardeners of the Borromean Islands, for in them he saw only the guardians of his treasure, he made the circuit of the gardens, glancing at the house from time to time, but with great circumspection; the two venerable proprietors were clearly suspicious of him. But his attention was soon attracted by the little dumb English girl, whose sagacity, although she was still so young, convinced him that she was a child of Africa, or at least a Sicilian. The girl had the golden color of an Havana cigar, flashing eyes with pupils of turquoise

blue, and oriental lashes of un-British length, hair blacker than jet, and beneath the olive skin, nerves of extraordinary strength and feverish vivacity. She gazed searchingly at Rodolphe with incredible impudence, and followed his slightest movements.

"To whom does yonder little Moor belong?" he inquired of worthy Madame Bergmann.

"To the English people," Monsieur Bergmann replied.

"But she wasn't born in England!"

"Perhaps they brought her from the Indies," suggested Madame Bergmann.

"I was told that young Miss Lovelace is fond of music; I should be delighted if she would permit me to sing with her during my stay on the lake, having been ordered hither by my doctor."

"They don't receive visitors and don't care to see anyone," said the old gardener.

Rodolphe bit his lips and went away, without having received an invitation to enter the house, and without being shown that part of the garden that lay between the house front and the edge of the headland. On that side there was a wooden balcony above the first floor, covered by the roof which projected an extraordinary distance like the roof of a chalet, and which extended around the four sides of the building after the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe praised this excellent arrangement and talked loudly of the view from the balcony, but to no purpose. When he had taken his leave of the Bergmanns he reviled himself as a blockhead, as every man of

sense and imagination does when disappointed by the failure of a project which he had believed would be successful.

In the evening he naturally went rowing on the lake around the headland; he went as far as Brünnen and Schwitz and returned at nightfall. From a distance he saw that the window was open and the room brilliantly lighted, and he could hear the sound of the piano and the sweet tones of a lovely voice. He ordered his rowers to stop that he might abandon himself to the bliss of listening to an Italian air, divinely sung. When the song was at an end, Rodolphe landed and sent away the boat and the two boatmen. At the risk of wetting his feet he sat down under the wall of granite worn away by the action of the water, on the crown of which was a thick hedge of prickly acacias, while an avenue of young lindens ran along its whole length in the Bergmann garden. After about an hour he heard footsteps and voices over his head; but the words that reached his ear were Italian words and uttered by two women's voices—two young women. He seized the opportunity when they were at one end to glide along to the other. After struggling for half an hour he reached the end of the avenue, and was able, without being seen or heard, to take up a position from which he could see the two women without being seen by them even if they should come close up to him. What was Rodolphe's amazement when he recognized in one of the two women the little mute! she was talking Italian with Miss Lovelace.

It was eleven o'clock at night. Everything was so quiet on the lake and about the house that they might well believe themselves safe from intrusion; in all Gersau there could be no other whose eyes were still open. Rodolphe concluded that the little one's dumbness was a necessary stratagem. By the way in which both of them spoke Italian he knew that it must be their mother tongue;—he concluded therefore that their masquerading as English also concealed some ruse.

"They're Italian refugees," he said to himself, "exiles, no doubt, who have reason to fear the police of Austria or Sardinia. The young woman waits until nightfall when she can walk about and talk in perfect safety."

He immediately lay down at the foot of the hedge and crawled along like a snake to find a passage between two acacia roots. At the risk of leaving his coat behind him or of inflicting serious wounds on his back, he passed through the hedge when the pretended Miss Fanny and the pseudo-mute were at the other end of the avenue; when they had returned to within twenty paces of where he was without seeing him, for he was crouching in the shadow of the hedge upon which the moon shone brightly, he suddenly rose.

"Don't be alarmed," he said in French to the Italian girl, "I am not a spy, you are refugees, I have guessed your secret. I am a Frenchman whom a single glance from your eyes has nailed to the soil of Gersau."

At that moment Rodolphe measured his length upon the ground, overcome by the pain caused by a sharp instrument piercing his side.

"*Nel lago con pietra!*" exclaimed the terrible mute.

"Oh! *Gina,*" cried the Italian.

"She missed me," said Rodolphe, drawing from the wound a stiletto which had glanced off one of the short ribs; "but if it had been a little higher it would have gone straight to my heart. I was wrong, Francesca," he added, remembering the name by which little Gina had called her several times; "I bear her no ill-will for it, don't scold her; the happiness of speaking to you is well worth a blow from a stiletto! But show me the way out, for I must get back to Stopfer's house. Have no fear, I will be silent."

Francesca, having recovered from her astonishment, assisted Rodolphe to rise, and said a few words to Gina, whose eyes filled with tears. The two women forced Rodolphe to sit down on a bench and to remove his coat, waistcoat and cravat. Gina opened his shirt and sucked the wound vigorously. Francesca, who had left them for a moment, returned with a large piece of English taffeta and placed it over the wound.

"You can go as far as your house so," she said.

Each of them took one of Rodolphe's arms, and led him to a small gate, the key of which was in the pocket of Francesca's apron.

"Does Gina speak French?" Rodolphe asked Francesca.

"No. But don't you excite yourself," she replied with a touch of impatience.

"Let me look at you," said Rodolphe with emotion, "for it may be a long time before I shall be able to come—"

He leaned against one of the posts of the little gate and gazed at the fair Italian, who submitted to his scrutiny for an instant amid the sweetest silence and in the loveliest moonlight that ever shone upon that lake,—the king of all Swiss lakes. Francesca was of the classic Italian type and beautiful as the imagination would have all Italian women, or pictures them or dreams of them, if you choose. The thing that impressed Rodolphe at first glance was the refined and graceful outline of her figure, which revealed its strength despite her frail appearance, she was so lithe and supple. The amber pallor of her cheeks betrayed her suddenly awakened interest, but did not veil the voluptuous glance of two moist, velvety-black eyes. Two hands, the loveliest that Greek sculptor ever attached to the polished arms of a statue, held Rodolphe's arm, and their whiteness was in striking contrast to the black sleeve of his coat. The imprudent Frenchman could see but vaguely the somewhat long, oval-shaped face, and the mouth sad and slightly parted which disclosed teeth of dazzling whiteness between two fresh, ruby lips. The beauty of the lines of her face assured Francesca of the lasting quality of her magnificent loveliness; but the thing that most impressed Rodolphe was the adorable ease of manner,

the Italian frankness of this woman, who abandoned herself unreservedly to her compassion.

Francesca said a word to Gina, who gave Rodolphe her arm to lean upon as far as the Stopfer house, and ran away like a swallow when she had rung the bell.

"These patriots don't go empty-handed!" said Rodolphe to himself, keenly alive to his suffering when he was alone in his bed. "*Nel lago!* Gina would have tossed me into the lake with a stone around my neck."

At daybreak he sent to Lucerne for the most skilful surgeon there; and when he arrived Rodolphe enjoined profound secrecy upon him, giving him to understand that honor demanded it. Léopold returned from his excursion on the day that his friend left his bed. Rodolphe told him a fairy story and sent him to Lucerne to bring the luggage and their letters. Léopold brought back the saddest, most horrible news; Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were on the way from Bâle to Lucerne, the fatal letter, written by Léopold's father, was despatched, and arrived at Lucerne the day of their departure for Fluelen. Notwithstanding the precautions taken by Léopold, Rodolphe was stricken down with a nervous fever. As soon as the future notary was sure that his friend was out of danger, he started for France, armed with a power of attorney. Thus Rodolphe was enabled to remain at Gersau, the only spot on earth where his grief could be allayed. The plight of the young Frenchman, his despair, and the circumstances that made

FRANCESCA, GINA AND RODOLPHE

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his loss more insupportable to him than to another, were known in the village, and attracted the compassion and interest of all Gersau. Every morning the pretended mute came to see the Frenchman in order to carry her mistress the latest news of his condition.

When Rodolphe was able to go out, he went to the Bergmanns to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had manifested in him. For the first time since he had taken up his abode under Bergmann's roof, the old Italian allowed a stranger to enter his apartments, where Rodolphe was received with a cordiality attributable both to his misfortunes and to the fact that he was a Frenchman, which made suspicion impossible. Francesca was so beautiful by candle-light that first evening, that she caused a ray of light to shine in upon that dejected heart. Her smile strewed the roses of hope upon his mourning garb. She sang, not lively airs, but sublime and lofty melodies appropriate to the state of Rodolphe's heart, and he did not fail to notice this touching attention. About eight o'clock the old man left the two young people alone without any apparent apprehension and went to his room. When Francesca was tired of singing, she took Rodolphe out upon the exterior balcony, where the sublime spectacle of the lake was spread out before them, and motioned to him to sit down beside her on a rustic wooden bench.

"Is it impertinent in me to ask your age, *cara* Francesca?" said Rodolphe.

and sanctify my love, you will treat me as a friend. May I not be your friend too? My poor mother left me sixty thousand francs that she had saved—take half of it!"

Francesca gazed earnestly into his face. Her penetrating gaze went to the very bottom of Rodolphe's heart.

"We need nothing, my work suffices for our luxurious mode of life," she replied gravely.

"Can I allow a Francesca to work?" he cried. "Some day you will return to your own country, and you will find there all that you left behind you—" Again the young Italian looked at Rodolphe.—"And you can then return what you have deigned to borrow from me," he added, looking up into her face with the utmost delicacy.

"Let us drop this subject of conversation," said she, with incomparable nobility of gesture, of expression and of attitude. "Make a brilliant name for yourself, be one of the eminent men of your country; it is my wish. Celebrity is a sort of flying-bridge that may help one across a chasm. Be ambitious; you must. I believe that you possess eminent and powerful talents; but use them for the welfare of mankind rather than to earn my love; you will be the greater in my eyes."

In this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered in Francesca the enthusiasm born of liberal ideas, and that devotion to liberty which had caused the triple revolution of Naples, Piedmont and Spain. When he left the house he

was escorted to the door by Gina, the false mute. At eleven o'clock no one was prowling about in the village, and there were no eavesdroppers to be feared; Rodolphe drew Gina into a corner and said to her beneath his breath, in wretched Italian:

"Who are your masters, my child? Tell me and I'll give you this new gold-piece."

"Monsieur," replied the child taking the money, "is the famous bookseller Lamporani, of Milan, one of the leaders of the revolution and the conspirator whom Austria is most anxious to have in the Spielberg."

"A bookseller's wife!—Aha! so much the better," thought he, "we're on the same level.—Of what family is she?" he continued aloud; "she has the bearing of a queen."

"So have all Italian women," replied Gina proudly. "Her father's name is Colonna."

Emboldened by Francesca's humble condition in life, Rodolphe ordered an awning spread over his boat, and placed cushions in the stern-sheets. When this change was effected, the amorous youth proposed to Francesca to go with him upon the lake. The Italian accepted the invitation, doubtless in order to continue to play her part as a young miss in the eyes of the village; but she took Gina. Francesca Colonna's slightest actions gave evidence of a superior education and the highest social rank. By the way in which the fair Italian sat at the stern of the boat, Rodolphe felt in some sense separated from her; and before the manifestation of the genuine

pride of noble birth, his premeditated familiarity fell to the ground. By a glance Francesca transformed herself into a princess with all the privileges she would have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. She seemed to have divined the secret thoughts of this vassal who had the audacity to constitute himself her protector. Even in the furnishing of the salon in which Francesca had received him, in her toilette and the little things she used, Rodolphe had detected indications of a lofty nature and exalted rank. All these observations rushed back into his mind at the same moment, and he fell a-musing, after he had been, so to speak, trodden under foot by Francesca's dignity. Even Gina, her confidante, hardly more than a child, seemed to wear a mask of mockery as she glanced at Rodolphe out of the corner of her eye. This evident incongruity between the Italian's condition and her manners was a new enigma to Rodolphe, who suspected some other ruse like Gina's pretended dumbness.

"Where would you like to go, *Signora Lamporani?*" he asked.

"Toward Lucerne," Francesca replied in French.

"Good!" thought Rodolphe, "she isn't surprised to hear me call her by her name, so she had anticipated my question to Gina, the sly creature!—"

"What have you against me?" he said, sitting down at last beside her and with a gesture asking for her hand, which Francesca drew away. "You are cold and ceremonious; in familiar style we should say forbidding."

"True," she replied with a smile. "I am wrong. It isn't right. It's vulgar. You would say in French: it's not artistic. It's much better to have an explanation than to cherish hostile or unkind thoughts against a friend, and you have already proved your friendship. Perhaps I have gone too far with you. You must have taken me for a very ordinary woman—"

Rodolphe multiplied gestures of denial.

—"Yes," continued the bookseller's wife, paying no heed to this pantomime, which she saw perfectly well however. "I noticed it, and naturally I came to my senses. Well, I will put an end to it all by a few words of profound truth. Understand this, Rodolphe; I feel that I have strength to stifle a sentiment which would be out of harmony with the ideas or the prescience I have of genuine love. I can love as we in Italy know how to love; but I know my duty; no excess of feeling can make me forget it. Married without my consent to this poor old man, I might avail myself of the liberty he so generously accords me; but three years of marriage are equivalent to full acceptance of the conjugal law. And so the most violent passion would not tempt me to manifest, even involuntarily, a desire to be free. Emilio knows my character. He knows that, outside of my heart which belongs to myself and which I can place where I please, I would not descend so far as to allow anyone to take my hand, and that is why I have just refused to allow you to do it. I want to be loved, to be waited for

faithfully, with ardor and nobility of soul, as I am unable to bestow anything more than infinite tenderness, whose expression will never pass the boundaries of the heart, the territory where it may exist. When all this is thoroughly understood—why!" she continued, tossing her head like a young girl, "I will be a flirt once more, laughing and giddy, like a child who knows nothing of the danger of familiarity."

This explicit, outspoken declaration was delivered in a tone and accent accompanied with an expression of the face that conveyed a most profound impression of its truth.

"A Princess Colonna would not have spoken more eloquently," said Rodolphe with a smile.

"Is that a reflection upon my humble birth?" she replied haughtily. "Does your love require an armorial crest? At Milan the noblest names,—Sforza, Canova, Visconti, Trivulzio, Ursini,—are written over shop-doors; there are Archintos there who are druggists; but I beg you to believe that, although I was born to the station of shopkeeper, I have the feelings of a duchess."

"A reflection? No, madame, I intended to speak of you in terms of praise—"

"By drawing a comparison?"—said she, slily.

"Ah!" he replied, "in order that you may torture me no more, if my words fail to express my sentiments, know once for all that my love is absolute and carries with it unbounded obedience and respect."

She bowed her head as if content, and said:

"In that case, monsieur accepts my conditions?"

"Yes," said he. "I understand that the faculty of loving could never be lost to such a powerful and richly endowed organization, and that, from motives of delicacy you choose to hold it in check. Ah! Francesca, to know at my age that my affection is requited by a woman so sublime, so royally beautiful as you are, is to attain the fulfilment of all my wishes. Is it not enough to keep a young man from all evil courses, to love you as you wish to be loved? is it not a means of employing his strength in a noble passion of which he can be proud hereafter, and which leaves none but pleasant memories?—If you knew with what beautiful colors, with what poetic thoughts you have clothed the mountain chain of Pilatus and the Rigi, and this superb sheet of water—"

"I would like to know," said she, with the artlessness of an Italian which always covers a little finesse.

"Ah! well, this hour will shed light over my whole life, like a diamond on a queen's brow."

Francesca's only reply was to place her hand upon Rodolphe's.

"O my darling, dear to me forever, tell me, have you never loved?" he asked.

"Never!"

"And you will permit me to love you with a noble love, awaiting the fulfilment of my hopes from heaven?"

She bent her head graciously. Two great tears rolled down Rodolphe's cheeks.

"Well, well, what's the matter?" said she, laying aside her rôle of empress.

"I have no longer a mother to tell her how happy I am; she left the world without seeing what would have soothed her suffering—"

"What is that?" she asked.

"Her affection replaced by an affection of equal strength."

"*Povero mio!*" cried the Italian, deeply moved. "It is a very sweet thing, believe me," she continued after a pause, "and a very important element of a woman's fidelity to know that she is everything on earth to the man she loves, to see him entirely alone, without family, with nothing in his heart save her love,—in short, to have him absolutely to herself."

When two lovers understand each other thus, the heart experiences a delicious sense of peace, a sublime tranquillity. Certainty is the basis that all human sentiments require, for it is never lacking to the religious sentiment; man is always certain of being well paid by God. Love never feels secure except when it bears this likeness to the divine love. Therefore one must have experienced to their fullest extent the pleasures of that moment, never occurring twice in one man's life, in order to appreciate them: that moment no more returns than the emotions of youth return. To have faith in a woman, to make of her one's human religion, the guiding principle of one's life, the hidden light of one's slightest

thoughts!—is it not a second birth? A young man at such times mingles with his love a little of the love he bears his mother. Rodolphe and Francesca preserved absolute silence for some time, answering each other by affectionate, thought-laden glances. They understood each other there in the midst of one of nature's fairest spectacles, whose magnificence, interpreted by their swelling hearts, assisted them to engrave upon their memories the most fleeting impressions of that unique hour. There was not the slightest trace of coquetry in Francesca's conduct. All was frank and open and unequivocal. This grandeur of soul made a deep impression upon Rodolphe, who recognized therein the distinction between the Italian woman and the French woman. The water, the sky, the earth, the woman, everything was grand yet sweet, even their love, in the midst of that panorama, vast in its extent, rich in its details, wherein the sharp snow-covered peaks, their rigid outlines clearly defined against the dark sky, reminded Rodolphe of the conditions in which his happiness was to be imprisoned; a fertile country surrounded by snow.

This beatific dream of the heart was soon to be disturbed. A boat came from the direction of Lucerne; Gina, who had been watching it attentively for some time, made a joyful gesture, remaining true to her rôle of dumb girl. The boat drew near and when Francesca could distinguish the faces of its occupants, she cried out to one of them, a young man:

"Tito!"

She stood up in the boat at the risk of drowning herself, and shouted: "Tito! Tito!" waving her handkerchief wildly.

Tito ordered his boatmen to back water, and the two boats drew up alongside each other. The Italians talked together with such rapidity of utterance, in a dialect altogether unfamiliar to a man who hardly knew Italian as it is found in books and had never been to Italy, that Rodolphe could neither understand nor guess at the drift of their conversation. Tito's beauty, Francesca's familiar manner, Gina's joyful expression, all combined to vex him. Indeed there never was a lover who would not be in bad humor to find that he was neglected for anyone else in the world. Tito hastily tossed a little leather bag, filled with gold no doubt, to Gina, and a package of letters to Francesca, who at once began to read them, waving a farewell to Tito.

"Return at once to Gersau," she said to the boatmen. "I mustn't leave my poor Emilio in suspense ten minutes longer than is necessary."

"What has happened?" asked Rodolphe, when he saw that the Italian had finished her last letter.

"Liberty!" she cried, with the enthusiasm of an artist.

"And money!" echoed Gina, finding her tongue at last.

"Yes," continued Francesca, "no more poverty for us. For more than eleven months now I have

been working, and I am beginning to be weary. Most decidedly I am not a literary woman."

"Who is this Tito?" asked Rodolphe.

"The Secretary of State for the financial department of the poor Colonna establishment, otherwise called the son of our *ragyionato*. Poor boy! he couldn't come by the St. Gothard, or by Mont Cenis, or by the Simplon: he came by sea, by Marseilles; he has had to travel across France. However, in three weeks we shall be in Geneva, and there we can live in comfort. Come, come, Rodolphe," observing the melancholy expression upon the Parisian's face, "isn't the Lake of Geneva as pleasant as the Lake of the Four Cantons?"

"Permit me to spare one regret for that delightful Bergmann abode," said Rodolphe, pointing toward the headland.

"You must come and dine with us to add to your stock of memories, *povero mio,*" said she. "To-day is a holiday, for we are no longer in danger. My mother tells me that, within a year perhaps, we shall be amnestied. Oh! *la cara patria!*—"

These three words brought tears to Gina's eyes.

"Another winter in this place and I should die!" said she.

"Poor little Sicilian kid!" said Francesca, passing her hand over Gina's head with an affectionate gesture that made Rodolphe long to be caressed in the same way, even though there was no love in the action.

The boat reached the shore, Rodolphe leaped out

upon the beach, put out his hand to assist the Italian, escorted her to the door of the Bergmann house, and went home to dress in order to return as soon as possible.

Finding the bookseller and his wife sitting on the outer gallery, Rodolphe could hardly keep back a gesture of amazement at the prodigious change the good news had wrought in the nonagenarian's appearance. He saw before him a man of about sixty years, perfectly preserved, a tall, thin Italian, straight as an I, with hair still black, albeit somewhat thin and affording glimpses of a skull white as ivory, bright eyes, a full complement of white teeth, a face like Cæsar's, and a half-sardonic smile playing about his mouth—the almost insincere smile beneath which the companionable man conceals his real sentiments.

"Here is my husband in his natural guise," said Francesca gravely.

"It's like making an entirely new acquaintance," rejoined Rodolphe, taken aback by the transformation.

"Even so," said the bookseller. "I have acted in my day, and know how to play the old man to perfection. Ah! I acted at Paris in the days of the Empire with Bourrienne, Madame Murat, Madame d'Abrantès, *e tutti quanti*. Whatever one has taken the trouble to learn in his youth, even trivial things, is likely to be of use some time. If my wife hadn't received a man's education, a thing frowned upon in Italy, I should have had to turn woodman to make

a living here. *Povera* Francesca! who would have thought that the day would come when she would support me?"

As he listened to this dignified bookseller, so perfectly at ease, so affable and so strong, Rodolphe believed that there was some mystery behind it all, and maintained the watchful silence of the man who has been once deceived.

"*Che avete, signor?*" Francesca naively asked. "Does our happiness make you sad?"

"Your husband is a young man," he whispered in her ear.

She burst into a hearty laugh, so spontaneous, so contagious, that Rodolphe was more embarrassed than ever.

"He has only sixty-five years to offer you," said she; "but I assure you that there is something—consoling, even in that fact."

"I don't like to hear you joking about a passion as holy as that of which you yourself established the conditions."

"*Zitto!*" she exclaimed, tapping the floor with her foot, and looking to see if her husband was listening. "Never do anything to disturb that dear man's peace of mind, for he is as innocent as a child and I do what I please with him. He is under my protection," she added. "If you knew with what noble generosity he risked his life and his fortune because I was a Liberal! for he does not share my political opinions. Do you call that love, Monsieur le Français?—But that's the way with the

whole family. Emilio's younger brother was thrown over by the woman he loved, in favor of a fascinating young man. He ran his sword through his heart, but ten minutes before he did it he said to his valet: 'I would like to kill my rival, but it would grieve *la diva* too deeply.' "

This combination of nobility and jesting, of grandeur and childishness, made Francesca at that moment the most bewitching creature on earth. The dinner, as well as the evening that followed it, was attended by an overflow of spirits which the deliverance of the two refugees justified, but which made Rodolphe sad.

"Can she be fickle?" he said to himself as he returned to his rooms in the Stopfer house. "She shared my grief, but I do not espouse her joy."

He reproved himself and justified the conduct of the girl-woman.

"She is entirely free from hypocrisy, she yields to her impulses," he said to himself. "And I would have her like a Parisian woman!"

The next day and the following days—for three weeks, in fact—Rodolphe passed all his time at the Bergmann house, watching Francesca without any previously formed plan to watch her. Admiration, in certain hearts, is accompanied with a sort of power of penetration. The young Frenchman recognized in Francesca a thoughtless girl, a genuine type of the woman as yet unsubdued, at times struggling with her love, and at other times self-complacently yielding to it. The old man bore

himself toward her as a father toward his daughter, and Francesca manifested a heartfelt gratitude to him which revealed the instinctive nobility of her character. The situation of affairs and the woman presented an insoluble enigma to Rodolphe, but one which he became more and more intent upon solving.

These last days were filled with secret fêtes, interspersed with fits of melancholy, rebellions, disputes more enchanting than the hours when nothing marred their perfect understanding. He yielded more and more to the naïve charm of this unreasoning affection, so like herself in every point—this affection that was jealous of a mere nothing—already!

"You are fond of luxury!" he said to Francesca one evening as she was speaking of her wish to leave Gersau, where she was obliged to do without many things.

"I!" said she; "I love luxury as I love the arts, as I love one of Raphael's paintings, or a handsome horse, or a lovely day, or the Bay of Naples.—Emilio," she added, "did I complain during our days of poverty here?"

"You wouldn't have been yourself if you had," said the old bookseller gravely.

"After all isn't it natural for tradespeople to be ambitious of grandeur?" she continued with a mischievous glance at Rodolphe and her husband. "Are my feet," she said, putting forward two lovely little feet, "made for fatigue? Are my hands—" she held out one hand to Rodolphe—"are these

hands made to work?—Leave us," she said to her husband; "I have something to say to him."

The old man with sublime good nature returned to the salon; he was sure of his wife.

"I prefer that you should not go with us to Geneva," said she to Rodolphe. "Geneva is a city of gossips. Although I am far above the idiotic prattle of the world, I do not wish to be slandered,—not for my own sake, but for *his*. It is my pride to be the glory of that old man, who is, after all, my only protector. We are going soon; do you remain here a few days. When you come to Geneva, see my husband first, let him present you to me. Let us conceal our profound and unalterable affection from the eyes of the world. I love you, and you know it; but this is how I will prove it to you; you will discover nothing whatever in my conduct that can arouse your jealousy."

She led him to the end of the gallery, took his head in her hands, kissed him on the forehead and ran away, leaving him speechless.

The next day, Rodolphe learned that the Bergmanns' guests had taken their leave at daybreak. The thought of living at Gersau was insupportable to him thenceforth, and he started for Vevay by the longest route, traveling more quickly than he should have done; and, irresistibly attracted by the waters of the lake where the fair Italian awaited him, he reached Geneva at last toward the end of October. To avoid the inconvenience of living in the city, he took lodgings in a house at Eaux-Vives,

outside the fortifications. He was no sooner installed in his new quarters than he sent for his host, a former jeweler, and asked him if certain Italian refugees, from Milan, had not recently taken up their abode in Geneva.

"Not that I know of," was the reply, "Prince and Princess Colonna of Rome have taken a lease for three years of Monsieur Jeanrenaud's country house, one of the finest estates on the lake. It is located between the Villa Diodati and Monsieur Lafin-de-Dieu's place, which the Vicomtesse de Beauséant has hired. Prince Colonna came here on account of his daughter and his son-in-law, Prince Gandolphini, a Neapolitan—or Sicilian, if you choose—a former partisan of King Murat and a victim of the last revolution. They are the latest arrivals at Geneva and they're not Milanese. It required a vast amount of negotiation and the pope's influence in favor of the Colonna family, to obtain permission from the foreign powers and the King of Naples for Prince and Princess Gandolphini to reside here. Geneva prefers to do nothing displeasing to the Holy Alliance, to which she owes her independence. *Our* policy is not to get into trouble with foreign courts. There are many foreigners here: Russians and English."

"There are some Genevans, too."

"Yes, monsieur. Our lake is so beautiful. Lord Byron lived at Villa Diodati about seven years ago, and now everybody goes to see it, like Coppet and Ferney."

"You can't find out for me, can you, whether a bookseller and his wife, one Lamporani, one of the leaders in the last revolution, have arrived here within a week?"

"I can find out by going to the *Cercle des Étrangers*," said the former jeweler.

Rodolphe's first excursion naturally had for its objective point the Villa Diodati, once the residence of Lord Byron, and rendered even more interesting by that great poet's recent death; death is the coronation of genius. The road thither from Eaux-Vives, which skirts the shore of the lake, is, like all Swiss roads, extremely narrow; and in certain spots, owing to the mountainous character of the country, there is barely enough room for two carriages to pass. A few steps from the Jeanrenaud house, which he had approached without being aware of it, Rodolphe heard the wheels of a carriage behind him; and as he was at that moment in a sort of defile he climbed to the top of a rock to leave the road clear. Naturally he watched the approach of the carriage, a stylish *calèche* drawn by two superb English horses. His eyes swam as he recognized Francesca, arrayed like a goddess, sitting on the back seat of the calèche, beside an old lady as stiff as a cameo. A footman, in glistening gold lace, stood behind. Francesca recognized Rodolphe, and smiled to see him standing like a statue on its pedestal. The carriage, which the amorous youth followed with his eyes as it climbed the hill, turned in at the gate of a villa, and he at once hurried after.

"Who lives here?" he asked the gardener.

"Prince and Princess Colonna, also Prince and Princess Gandolphini."

"Were those the princesses who just drove in?"

"Yes, monsieur."

In a second, a veil fell from before Rodolphe's eyes, and the past was made clear to him.

"If only this is the last mystification!" said the thunderstruck lover to himself at last.

He trembled to think that he might have been the plaything of a caprice, for he had heard what a formidable thing a *capriccio* may be in the hands of an Italian woman. But what a deadly crime, in a woman's eyes, to have accepted a princess, a born princess, as a woman of the bourgeois class! to have taken the daughter of one of the most illustrious families of the Middle Ages for a bookseller's wife! The consciousness of his blunders redoubled Rodolphe's anxiety to know if he would be disowned, repulsed. He asked for Prince Gandolphini and sent in his card, and was immediately received by the false Lamporani, who came out to meet him, welcomed him with perfect courtesy, with true Neapolitan affability, and took him the whole length of a terrace, from which they could see Geneva, the Jura and its villa-crowned hills, and the banks of the lake extending as far as the eye could see.

"My wife is faithful to the lakes, you see," he said, after pointing out the chief features of the landscape to his guest. "We have a sort of concert this evening," he added, returning toward the

magnificent Jeanrenaud mansion; "I trust that you will give the princess and myself the pleasure of your company. Two months of wretchedness endured in common are equivalent to years of friendship."

Although consumed with curiosity, Rodolphe did not dare ask to see the princess; he returned slowly to Eaux-Vives, absorbed by his anticipations of the evening. Within a few hours, his love, prodigious as it already was, was greatly increased by his anxiety and by his suspense as to the future. He realized now the necessity of making a name for himself, so that he might be, socially speaking, upon his idol's level. In his eyes, Francesca seemed grand beyond words by reason of the unconstraint and the simplicity of her conduct at Gersau. The naturally haughty air of the Princess Colonna made Rodolphe tremble; and he was certain to have against him Francesca's father and mother,—at least he might well expect it; and the secrecy as to their former acquaintance so earnestly urged upon him by Princess Gandolphini seemed to him then a convincing proof of her affection. By her unwillingness to endanger the future did not Francesca say as plainly as possible that she loved Rodolphe?

At last nine o'clock struck and Rodolphe could take a carriage and say to the driver with emotion easy to understand:

"To Prince Gandolphini's, Maison Jeanrenaud!"

He entered the salon, filled with foreigners of the highest distinction, and remained perforce in a group

near the door, for a duet by Rossini was being sung at the moment. At last he caught sight of Francesca, but without being seen by her. The princess was standing within two steps of the piano. Her beautiful hair, long and luxuriant, was confined by a circlet of gold. Her face, with the candles shining full upon it, displayed the marvelous whiteness peculiar to Italian women, which produces its full effect only by artificial light. She was in a ball-dress, showing to the best advantage her magnificent shoulders, her girlish waist and the arms of an antique statue. Her sublime beauty was beyond all possibility of rivalry, although there were lovely English women and Russians there, the prettiest women in Geneva, and other Italians, among whom the illustrious Princess of Veresa shone pre-eminent, and the famous cantatrice, Tinti, who was singing at that moment. Rodolphe, leaning against the doorpost, fixed upon the princess a persistent, penetrating, magnetic gaze, laden with the whole force of the human will concentrated in the sentiment called *desire,* but which assumes at such times the nature of a command. Did the flame from that gaze reach Francesca? Was Francesca momentarily expecting to see Rodolphe? After a few moments she glanced toward the door, as if attracted by that love-current, and her eyes, without hesitation, plunged into Rodolphe's eyes. A slight shudder stirred the superb face and the beautiful body; the shock to the heart reacted outward! Francesca blushed. Rodolphe lived a whole lifetime,

as it were, in that exchange of glances, so swift that it could be compared only to a flash of lightning. But to what can we compare his happiness? he was beloved! The divine princess, there in the magnificent Jeanrenaud villa, surrounded by the kings and queens of society, kept the promise given by the poor exile, the capricious guest at the house of Bergmann. The intoxication of such a moment makes a man a slave for a lifetime! A slight smile, sly and fascinating, ingenuous and triumphant, played about Princess Gandolphini's lips, and, at a time when she thought she was unobserved she looked at Rodolphe with an expression that seemed to crave his forgiveness for having deceived him as to her rank. The performance at an end, Rodolphe succeeded in making his way to the prince, who graciously led him to where his wife was standing. Rodolphe went through the ceremony of a formal introduction to the princess, Prince Colonna and Francesca. When this was at an end, the princess was called upon to take part in the famous quartet, *Mi manca la voce,* which was executed by herself, La Tinti, Génovèse the famous tenor, and an illustrious Italian prince then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been born a prince, would have made him one of the princes of the art.

"Sit there," said Francesca to Rodolphe, pointing to her own chair. "*Oimè!* I believe there's something wrong about my name: for the past few moments I have been Princess Rodolphini."

This confession, veiled behind a jest, was uttered

with a fascinating, artless grace that recalled the blissful days at Gersau.

Rodolphe experienced the delicious sensation of listening to the voice of the woman he adored, sitting so near to her that one of his cheeks was almost brushed by her dress and the gauze of her scarf. But when, under such conditions, the *Mi manca la voce* is being sung by the finest voices Italy can furnish, it is easy to understand why Rodolphe's eyes were wet with tears.

In love, as in everything else perhaps, there are certain facts, of the most trifling importance in themselves, but which result from a thousand anterior circumstances, and may be very far-reaching in their effects as summing up the past and leading the way to the future. We may have been conscious time and again of the inestimable worth of the loved one; but a mere nothing, the perfect contact of two hearts welded together during a walk by a single word, by an unexpected *proof* of love, exalts that feeling to its highest point. In fine, to illustrate this moral truth by a figure that has had the most incontestable success since the world began: there are, in a long chain, necessary points of union where the cohesion is more perfect than in its long succession of links. This mutual recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca in the face of the world during that evening was one of the supreme incidents that bind the future to the past, that nail genuine attachments more firmly in the heart. Perhaps it was of such nails scattered here and there

that Bossuet spoke, when he, who was so keenly but secretly alive to love's emotion, compared with them the scarcity of happy moments in our lives.

Next to the pleasure of gazing admiringly with one's own eyes upon the woman one loves, comes that of seeing her universally admired; Rodolphe enjoyed both pleasures at once. Love is a treasury of memories, and although Rodolphe's was already running over, he added divers priceless pearls to the heap; smiles meant for him alone, furtive glances, inflections of the voice while singing that Francesca improvised for him but that made La Tinti turn pale with jealousy, so wildly were they applauded. Thus the whole force of desire, the special characteristic of his heart, was concentrated on the lovely Roman, who became unalterably the moving principle and the goal of his every thought and his every act. Rodolphe loved as all women may dream of being loved, with a force, a constancy, a tenacity that made Francesca a part of the very substance of his heart; he felt that she was mingled with his blood as purer blood than his, with his heart as a more perfect heart; she would thenceforth be always present beneath the most trivial acts of his life as the golden sand of the Mediterranean beneath its waters. In short, Rodolphe's faintest aspiration became an active hope.

After a few days, Francesca realized the immensity of his love; but it was so natural, so fully requited, that she was not surprised at it; she was worthy of it.

"What is there surprising," she said to Rodolphe, as they were walking upon the terrace in her garden, after she had surprised him in the act of yielding to one of the conceited impulses so natural to Frenchmen in the expression of their feelings,—"what is there to wonder at in your loving a young, beautiful woman, who is enough of an artist to be able to earn her living as La Tinti does, and can gratify your vanity to some extent? What lout would not become an Amadis under such circumstances? That's not the question between us. What we must do is to be faithful and constant in our love, for long years and at a distance, without other pleasure than that of knowing that we are loved."

"Alas!" said Rodolphe, "shall you not consider that my fidelity is deprived of all merit when you see me intent upon the tasks set me by a consuming ambition? Do you think that I want you some day to exchange the illustrious name of Gandolphini for the name of a man who amounts to nothing? I mean to become one of the most illustrious men in my country, to be rich and great, so that you may be as proud of my name as of your own name of Colonna."

"I should be very sorry to know that you had not such sentiments in your heart," she replied with a charming smile. "But don't expend too much of your strength in satisfying your ambition; remain young.—They say that politics makes a man old before his time."

The rarest quality among women is a certain

amount of light-heartedness that does not diminish their affections. This combination of deep-rooted sentiment with the gaiety of youth added other adorable charms to those already possessed by Francesca. Therein lies the key to her character; she laughs and weeps, she rises to lofty heights of sentiment and reverts to sly raillery with an abandon, an ease of manner, which make of her the fascinating, delightful creature whose reputation extends far beyond the limits of Italy. She concealed beneath the charms of the woman very extensive learning, the result of the monotonous, quasi-conventual life she had led in the old château of the Colonnas. The wealthy heiress was originally destined for the cloister, being the fourth child of the Prince and Princess Colonna; but the deaths of her twin brothers and her older sister brought her forth suddenly from her retirement to make of her one of the most desirable matches to be found in Roman territory. As her elder sister's hand had been promised to Prince Gandolphini, one of the richest landed proprietors in Sicily, Francesca's hand was bestowed upon him that there might be no change in the family arrangements. The Colonnas and Gandolphinis had always intermarried. From nine to sixteen, Francesca, under the guidance of a cardinal who was her kinsman, read the whole Colonna library, in order to divert the course of her ardent imagination by studying the sciences, the arts and literature. But as a result of her studies she acquired that leaning toward independence and liberal

ideas which led her to throw herself, as well as her husband, into the revolution. Rodolphe did not as yet know that, in addition to the five living languages, Francesca knew Greek, Latin and Hebrew. This charming creature was fully conscious that one of the first essentials of learning, in a woman, is that it be carefully concealed.

Rodolphe remained all the winter at Geneva. The winter passed like a single day. With the advent of spring, notwithstanding the exquisite pleasure to be derived from the society of an intellectual woman, of extraordinary learning, young and light-hearted, this love-lorn youth experienced cruel suffering, endured with courage to be sure, but which sometimes made itself visible on his face, and affected his conduct and his speech, perhaps because he thought that he alone felt it. Sometimes he was annoyed at Francesca's tranquillity, for, like the English, it seemed to be a matter of pride with her to allow no trace of her feelings to appear upon her face, whose serenity defied love; he would have liked her to show some agitation, he accused her of having no feeling, trusting to the commonly received idea that all Italian women are restless and excitable.

"I am a Roman!" Francesca gravely remarked one day, taking seriously some jest of Rodolphe's on that subject.

There was in the tone in which she made this reply a depth of feeling which made it seem like fierce irony, and which made Rodolphe's heart beat

fast. The month of May was displaying its treasures of fresh verdure, the sun was as powerful at times as in midsummer. The two lovers were leaning upon the stone balustrade which surmounts the supporting wall of a stairway leading down to the landing-stage, at a part of the terrace where the shore rises perpendicularly from the lake. From the next villa, where there was a similar landing-stage, a yawl shot out into the lake like a swan, with its red flag and crimson canopy, beneath which a lovely woman with a head-dress of natural flowers was lolling upon red cushions, rowed by a young man dressed as a sailor, who plied his oars with more finished grace because the woman's eyes were upon him.

"They are happy!" said Rodolphe in a discontented tone. "Claire de Bourgogne, the last scion of the only house that has ever held its own against the royal house of France—"

"Oho!—she descends from an illegitimate branch, and in the female line too—"

"But she is Vicomtesse de Beauséant, and hasn't—"

"Hasn't hesitated, you would say, to bury herself here with Monsieur Gaston du Nueil?" said the daughter of the Colonnas. "She is only a Frenchwoman and I am an Italian, my dear monsieur."

Francesca left the balustrade, turned her back on Rodolphe, and went to the farther end of the terrace, whence there is a view of a vast expanse of the lake. As he saw her walking slowly away,

Rodolphe had a suspicion that he had wounded that heart at once so innocent and so enlightened, so proud and so humble. He was cold with dismay; he followed Francesca, who motioned to him to leave her to herself; but he paid no heed to the warning and surprised her wiping away tears. Tears with so virile a nature as hers!

"Francesca," he said, taking her hand, "is there a single regret in your heart?"

She said nothing, but withdrew her hand which held her embroidered handkerchief, in order to wipe her eyes again.

"Forgive me!" he continued.

And with an irresistible impulse, he put his lips to her eyes to wipe away the tears with kisses.

Francesca was so deeply moved that she did not notice this passionate movement. Rodolphe, thinking that she consented, grew bolder; he threw his arm about Francesca's waist, pressed her to his heart, and stole a kiss; but she extricated herself with a superb gesture of offended modesty, and standing two steps away, said to him, without anger but with decision:

"Go away to-night; we shall not meet again until we return to Naples."

Notwithstanding the severity of this order, it was religiously obeyed, for Francesca wished it.

On his return to Paris Rodolphe found at his rooms the Princess Gandolphini's portrait, painted by Schinner, as only Schinner can paint a portrait. The painter had passed through Geneva on his way

to Italy. As he had positively refused to paint several ladies, Rodolphe did not believe that the prince, who was extremely desirous to have a portrait of his wife, could have succeeded in overcoming the famous artist's repugnance; but Francesca had fascinated him, without doubt, and had obtained from him—and a prodigious achievement it was—an original portrait for Rodolphe, a copy for Emilio. That is what was told him in an enchanting, soul-satisfying letter wherein the thought took its revenge for the restraint imposed by the religion of the proprieties. The lover replied. Thus began, to cease no more, a regular correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca, the only pleasure they permitted themselves to indulge in.

Rodolphe, mastered by ambition which his love made legitimate, put his shoulder to the wheel at once. He wanted fortune first of all, and risked all his powers and all his capital in a new enterprise; but he had to contend, with the inexperience of youth, against a system of double-dealing which triumphed over him. Three years were thrown away in this vast undertaking, three years of courageous effort.

The Villèle ministry went by the board just at the time when Rodolphe succumbed. Immediately, the undaunted lover determined to seek in politics what commerce denied him; but before launching his bark on the stormy sea of that career, he went, all crushed and broken, to have his wounds dressed and to procure a fresh supply of courage at Naples, whither

the Prince and Princess Gandolphini had been recalled to be restored to their estates, at the accession of the king. This was a period of blissful repose in the midst of his strife; he passed three months at the Villa Gandolphini, soothed by sweet hopes.

Once more Rodolphe began to rebuild the edifice of his fortune. His talents had already attracted attention, he was on the point of realizing his ambition, an eminent position had been promised him in recognition of his zeal and devotion, and of services rendered by him, when the storm of July 1830, burst, and his bark foundered once more.

She and God, those two are the only witnesses of the most brave-hearted efforts, the most audacious ventures of a young man, endowed with valuable qualities, but who, thus far, has failed to secure the assistance of the god of fools, Luck! And this untiring athlete, sustained by his love, is about engaging in fresh combats, made bright by a friendly glance, by a faithful heart!—

Lovers, pray for him!—

*

When she came to the end of this tale, which she fairly devoured, Mademoiselle de Watteville's cheeks were on fire, fever was in her veins; she was weeping, but with rage. This novel, inspired by the fashionable literature of the day, was the first work of the sort Rosalie had ever been permitted to read. Love was depicted there, if not by a master's hand, at all events by a man who seemed to be recording his own impressions; now the truth, albeit unskilfully told, should make its mark on a still virgin heart. Therein lay the secret of Rosalie's terrible excitement, of her burning fever and her tears; she was jealous of Francesca Colonna. She did not doubt the sincerity of that poetic conception; Albert had taken pleasure in describing the beginning of his passion, disguising the names, of course, and perhaps the places as well. Rosalie was seized with an infernal curiosity. What woman would not have longed, as she did, to know her rival's real name? for she was in love! As she read those papers laden with contagion for her, she had said to herself these solemn words: "I love!" She loved Albert and was conscious of an intense longing in her heart to fight for him, to tear him from this unknown rival. She reflected that she knew nothing of music and that she was not beautiful.

"He will never love me," she said to herself.

This thought increased tenfold her desire to find out if she were not mistaken, if Albert were really in love with an Italian princess, and if she loved him. During that fatal night the faculty of swift decision which distinguished the famous Watteville, was displayed to the fullest extent by his descendant. She conceived some of those extraordinary projects, about which almost every young girl's imagination hovers, when, amid the solitude in which some injudicious mothers rear their daughters, they are excited by some momentous event which the system of compression to which they are subjected has failed to anticipate or to prevent. She thought of descending by a ladder, from the belvedere, into the garden of the house where Albert lived, and of taking advantage of the advocate's slumber to look into his office through the window. She thought of writing to him, she thought of breaking all the fetters of Bisontine society by introducing Albert into the De Rupt salon. This enterprise, which would have seemed the acme of the impossible to the Abbé de Grancey himself, suggested a thought.

"Ah!" she said to herself, "my father has some trouble or other at the Rouxeys; I'll go there! If there isn't a lawsuit about it, I'll start one, and *he* will come to our salon!" she cried, darting from her bed to the window to see the marvelous light that illumined Albert's vigils.

One o'clock struck; he was still asleep.

"I shall see him when he gets up, perhaps he'll come to his window!"

At that moment Mademoiselle de Watteville was an eye-witness of an occurrence which was destined to place in her hands the means of attaining a knowledge of Albert's secrets. By the light of the moon she saw a pair of arms stretched out from the belvedere, which assisted Jérôme, Albert's servant, to climb over the crest of the wall and enter the structure. In Jérôme's accomplice, Rosalie readily recognized Mariette, the maid.

"Mariette and Jérôme," she said to herself. "And Mariette is such an ugly creature! Certainly, they ought both to be ashamed of themselves."

Although Mariette was horribly ugly and thirty-six years old, she had inherited several acres of land. Having been seventeen years in the service of Madame de Watteville, who held her in high esteem because of her piety, her honesty and her length of service in the family, she had saved some money without doubt, had invested her wages and her profits. At ten louis a year, she should be the mistress of some fifteen thousand francs, reckoning compound interest and the land she had inherited. In Jérôme's eyes fifteen thousand francs changed all the laws of optics: he thought Mariette had a very pretty figure, he could not see the holes and seams left upon her dull, wrinkled face by a terrible attack of small-pox; in his eyes the twisted mouth was straight; and since Savaron the advocate, by taking him into his service, had brought him within a short distance of the De Rupt mansion, he was laying siege in due form to the pious serving-maid,

who was as stiff and prudish as her mistress, and, like all ugly old maids, was more exacting than the loveliest of women. If now the nocturnal scene in the belvedere is explained to the satisfaction of clear-sighted folk, it was still most mysterious to Rosalie, who nevertheless learned from it the most dangerous of all lessons, that, namely, which a bad example teaches. A mother brings up her daughter with the utmost rigor, covers her with her wings for seventeen years, and, in a single hour, a servant makes this long and painful toil of no effect, sometimes by a word, often by a mere gesture! Rosalie went back to bed, not without reflecting upon all the advantage she might derive from her discovery. The next morning, as she was on her way to mass with Mariette—the baroness being indisposed—Rosalie took her maid's arm, thereby greatly surprising the young woman.

"Mariette," said she, "is Jérôme in his master's confidence?"

"I don't know, mademoiselle."

"Don't play the innocent with me," rejoined Rosalie dryly. "You allowed him to kiss you last night in the summer-house. I am no longer surprised that you were so much in favor of my mother's proposed improvements there."

Rosalie was conscious of the fit of trembling that seized Mariette, by the shaking of her arm.

"I wish you no ill," continued Rosalie; "never fear, I won't say a word to my mother, and you can see Jérôme as much as you wish."

"But, mademoiselle," Mariette replied, "it's all as it should be; Jérôme has no other purpose than to marry me—"

"But, in that case, why do you make appointments with him at night?"

Mariette was silenced and did not know what reply to make.

"Listen to me, Mariette; I too am in love! I love in secret, and all by myself. After all, I am the only child of my parents; so you have more to expect from me than from anybody else in the world—"

"Certainly, mademoiselle, you can rely upon us in life or death," cried Mariette, overjoyed at this unexpected conclusion.

"In the first place, silence for silence," said Rosalie. "I don't want to marry Monsieur de Soulas; but I do want a certain thing, absolutely want it; you can have my protection only at that price."

"What is it?" Mariette asked.

"I want to see the letters Monsieur Savaron sends to the post by Jérôme."

"Why, what for?" said Mariette in dismay.

"Oh! just to read, and you can put them in the post yourself afterward. That will delay them just a little, that's all."

At that moment Mariette and Rosalie entered the church, and each of them pursued her own reflections instead of following the reading of the mass.

"Mon Dieu! how many deadly sins are there in all this?" said Mariette to herself.

Rosalie, whose mind and brain and heart were in a turmoil from the perusal of the novel, saw in it a sort of narrative written for her rival. By dint of thinking long, as children do, upon the same subject, she finally came to the conclusion that the *Revue de l'Est* was probably sent to Albert's beloved.

"Oh!" she said to herself on her knees, with her head buried in her hands, in the attitude of one lost in prayer, "oh! how can I induce father to consult the list of persons to whom the *Revue* is sent?"

After breakfast she walked around the garden with her father, talking to him in a cajoling way, and led him under the summer-house.

"Do you suppose our *Revue* goes to foreign countries, dear little papa?"

"It's only just starting—"

"Well, I'll wager that it does."

"It's hardly possible."

"Go and find out, and copy the names of the foreign subscribers."

Two hours later Monsieur de Watteville said to his daughter:

"I was right, there's not a subscriber yet outside of France. They hope to get some at Neufchâtel, at Berne, at Geneva. They are sending a copy to Italy, gratuitously, to a Milanese lady at her country estate of Belgirate on Lago Maggiore."

"What's her name?" said Rosalie eagerly.

"The Duchess of Argaiolo."

"Do you know her, father?"

"Naturally, I have heard of her. She was born Princess Soderini; she's a Florentine, a very great lady and quite as rich as her husband, who possesses one of the greatest fortunes in all Lombardy. Their villa on Lago Maggiore is one of the curiosities of Italy."

*

Two days later Mariette handed Rosalie the following letter:

ALBERT SAVARON TO LÉOPOLD HANNEQUIN

"Well, yes, my dear friend, I was here at Besançon while you supposed I was traveling. I didn't want to tell you anything until success was at hand and this is its dawn. Yes, dear Léopold, after so many abortive undertakings in which I have expended my purest blood, upon which I have wasted such strenuous effort and so much courage, I determined to follow your example; to take a beaten track, the high road, the longest but the surest. I can see you jump in your notarial armchair. But do not imagine that there has been any change in my interior life, of which you alone in the world know the secret, subject to the conditions which *she* required. I did not tell you so, my friend, but I was horribly bored at Paris. The conclusion of the first enterprise, on which I rested all my hopes, and which came to nothing on account of the double-dyed villainy of my two partners, who put their heads together to deceive me and rob me—me, to whose energy every promise of success was due—made me abandon the idea of seeking pecuniary fortune after I had wasted in that pursuit three years

of my life, of which one year was passed in litigation. Perhaps I should not have come out of it so well had I not been compelled, at twenty, to study law. I have determined to become prominent in politics for the sole purpose of being some day included among the elevations to the peerage under the title of Comte Albert Savaron de Savarus, and of reviving in France an honorable name which is extinct in Belgium, although I am neither legitimate nor legitimated!—"

"Ah! I was sure of it, he is of noble birth!" cried Rosalie, dropping the letter.

"You know how conscientiously I studied, how hard I worked and how useful I made myself as an obscure journalist, and what an admirable secretary I was to the statesman who was faithful to me, by the way, in 1829. Reduced to a cipher once more by the Revolution of July, just when my name was beginning to be known, and when, as master of requests, I was at last on the point of being made part of the political machine as a necessary spoke, I made the mistake of remaining faithful to the vanquished, of fighting for them without their assistance. Ah! why was I only thirty-three years old; why did I not ask you to make me eligible? I hid all my sacrifices and all my perils from you. What would you have? I had faith; we should have disagreed. Ten months ago, when I seemed to you to be so light of heart and so content with my lot,

writing my political articles, I was desperate! I saw myself at the age of thirty-seven, with only two thousand francs in the world, without the slightest approach to celebrity, having just failed in a noble undertaking, that of carrying on a daily newspaper, which aimed to fill a want of the future instead of appealing to the passions of the moment. I didn't know which way to turn. And yet I knew my own powers! I walked about, unhappy and wounded to the heart, in the deserted quarters of that Paris which had eluded my grasp, thinking of my foiled ambition, but without abandoning it. Oh! what letters I wrote in my frenzy to *her*, my second conscience, my other self! At times I said to myself:

"'Why have I sketched so vast a program for my life? why aspire to everything? why not await the coming of happiness, devoting myself meanwhile to some quasi-mechanical occupation?'

"At such times I have looked about for a retired spot where I could live. I was about to take the editorship of a newspaper under a manager who knew but little, an ambitious rich man, when I was seized with terror.

"'Would *she* want for her husband a lover who had descended so low?' I said to myself.

"That reflection gave me back my twenty-two years! Oh! my dear Léopold, how the heart does wear itself out in such perplexities! What must caged eagles suffer, and imprisoned lions? They suffer all that Napoléon suffered, not at St. Helena, but on the Quai des Tuileries on the tenth of August,

when he, who could put down sedition as he did later on the same spot, in Vendémiaire, saw Louis XVI. defending himself so feebly! Well, my life has been that one day's suffering extended over four years. How many speeches to the Chamber have I not declaimed in the deserted avenues of the Bois de Boulogne! These profitless improvisations did at least sharpen my tongue and accustom my mind to give form to its thoughts in words. While I was suffering these secret torments, you married, paid the last instalment of your notarial fee, and became deputy-mayor of your arrondissement, after earning the cross by the wound you received at Saint-Merri.

"Listen! When I was a little fellow and used to torment cockchafers, the poor creatures used to do one thing that almost gave me a fever: it was when I saw them making repeated efforts to fly without rising from the ground, although they succeeded in spreading their wings. We used to say of them: *They're counting!* Was it sympathy? was it a vision of my future? Oh! to spread one's wings and to be unable to fly! That is what has been my fate since that promising undertaking which turned out to my discomfiture, but which made four families rich.

"At last, seven months since, I determined to make myself a name at the Paris bar, when I saw what gaps were left there by the promotion of so many advocates to high office. But, as I remembered the rivalries that exist in the press, and how difficult it is to succeed in anything whatsoever at

Paris, the arena in which so many champions meet, I formed a resolution, cruel to myself, but certain in its results and perhaps more speedily efficacious than any other. You have explained to me, in our talks together, the social constitution of Besançon, the impossibility of a stranger's making his way there, or making the least sensation, marrying, getting into society, or succeeding in any direction whatsoever. That was where I determined to plant my flag, rightly concluding that I should escape rivalry there, and should be quite alone in scheming for election to the Chamber. The natives of Franche-Comté don't choose to see the stranger,—the stranger will not see them! they refuse to admit him to their salons,—he will never go there! he won't show his face anywhere, not even in the streets! But there is one class of men that makes deputies, the business men. I will make a special study of commercial questions, with which I am already familiar; I will win lawsuits, I will settle disputes, I will become the leading advocate of Besançon. Later on I will found a review there in which I will defend the interests of the province, in which I will create new interests, vivify or regenerate the old. When I have won over, one by one, a sufficient number of votes, my name will head the poll. For a long while people will look with disdain upon the unknown advocate, but there will be one way of bringing him forward into the light, to undertake a case gratuitously—some case that other advocates don't choose to touch. If I speak once I

am sure of success. And so, my dear Léopold, I had my library packed in eleven chests, I bought such law books as might be of use to me, and I put them all, as well as my furniture, on the goods-wagon for Besançon. I took my diplomas, scraped a thousand crowns together and went to say farewell to you. The mail-coach landed me in Besançon, where, after looking about for three days, I selected a small suite of rooms overlooking some gardens; there I sumptuously furnished the mysterious office where I pass my nights and days, and where the portrait of my idol looks down upon me —her portrait, to whom my life is consecrated, who fills my heart, who is the mainspring of my struggles, the secret of my courage, the foundation of my talent. When the furniture and books arrived, I hired an intelligent servant and remained for five months like a marmot in winter. My name was inscribed on the roll of advocates, by the way. At last I was appointed by the court to defend a poor devil at the assizes, for the pleasure of hearing my voice at least once, no doubt! One of the most influential business men in Besançon was on the jury; he had a complicated case of his own; I did all man could do for the poor man, and I was entirely successful. My client was acquitted, and I dramatically caused the arrest of the real culprits who were among the witnesses. At the end, the court echoed the admiration of the public. I cleverly spared the self-esteem of the committing magistrate by pointing out that it was almost an impossibility to discover

so deftly woven a plot. I secured my wealthy merchant as a client and won his case for him. The chapter of the cathedral selected me for counsel in a suit of immense importance, with the city, which had lasted four years: I won it. By virtue of these three causes I have become the leading advocate in Franche-Comté. But I shroud my life in the most profound mystery, and thus conceal my real purpose. I have formed habits which enable me to decline all invitations. I can be consulted only between six and eight in the morning, I go to bed immediately after dinner, and work during the night. The vicar-general, a bright man and very influential, who employed me in the affair of the chapter, which had been decided adversely in the court of first instance, naturally spoke to me about my remuneration.

"'Monsieur,' said I to him, 'I will win your case, but I want no fees, I want something more—' the abbé gave a start—'Understand that I lose a vast deal by taking up a position adverse to the city; I came here to be elected deputy, I don't care to undertake any but commercial cases, because the business men make deputies, and they will distrust me if I try cases for *the priests*—for in their eyes you are *the priests*. If I undertake this case of yours, it is only because I was, in 1828, private secretary to such a minister—' another gesture of amazement from my abbé—'master of requests under the name of Albert de Savarus'—another gesture.—'I have remained true to monarchical principles; but as you

are not in the majority in Besançon, I must look for votes among the bourgeoisie. And so the fees that I ask from you are such votes as you can turn over to me, secretly, at an opportune moment. Let us both agree to keep the secret, and I will try all the cases of all the priests in the diocese for nothing. Not a word as to my antecedents, and let us be true to each other.'

"When he came to thank me, he handed me a bank-note for five hundred francs, and whispered in my ear:

"'The votes still hold good.'

"In the course of five consultations that we had together I made a friend of this vicar-general, I think. Now I am overcrowded with cases, and take only those in which business men are interested, saying that commercial questions are my specialty. These tactics attract the business men to me and allow me to ascertain who the influential people are. So all goes well. Within a few months I shall have found a house in Besançon to buy, which will give me the necessary qualification. I rely upon you to loan me the necessary funds for the purchase. If I die, or if I fail, the loss will not be heavy enough to make it a consideration between us. The interest will be taken care of by the rents, and I shall be very careful to wait for a good bargain so that you may lose nothing by this enforced mortgage loan.

"Ah! my dear Leopold, never did a gambler, with all that remains of his fortune in his pocket, stake it at the *Cercle des Étrangers* on the last night

which was to leave him rich or ruined, with such perpetual jangling of bells in his ears, such a nervous sweat moistening his hands, such feverish excitement in his brain, such inward tremblings in his body, as I experience day after day while I play my last stake in the game of ambition. Alas! my dear and only friend, soon it will be ten years that I have been engaged in this struggle. This constant combat with men and things, in which I have expended my strength and my energy, in which I have almost worn out the springs of desire, has undermined me, so to speak, within. Although apparently strong and in good health, I feel that I am a wreck. Every day carries away a fragment of my inmost life. With every new effort I feel that I can never begin again. I have no force, no power left save for happiness, and if it should not come and lay its wreath of roses on my head, the *I* that is in me would cease to exist, I should become a worn-out chattel, I should no longer wish for anything on earth, nor wish to be anything. As you know, the power and renown, the moral fortune for which I strive, are but a secondary consideration: they are the means of attaining felicity, the pedestal of my idol.

"To die as one reaches the goal, like the runner of old! to see fortune and death arriving together at one's threshold! to obtain one's love at the moment love is dying! to have lost the power to enjoy when one has conquered the right to live happily!—oh! of how many men that is the destiny!

"Surely there comes a moment when Tantalus calls a halt, folds his arms and defies hell, abandoning his trade of everlasting trickster. I shall have reached that point if anything should cause my plan to fail; if, after I have crawled in the dust of the provinces, like a hungry tiger, around these merchants and electors to secure their votes; if, after I have tried their paltry cases and have given them my time—the time I might have passed on Lago Maggiore, looking upon the water that she looks upon, lying beneath her eyes and hearing her sweet voice,—if, I say, I should not make my way to the tribune, there to win the halo that should surround a name to succeed the name of Argaiolo. More than that,—Léopold, some days I feel a vague languor; a deathly sense of loathing rises from the bottom of my heart, especially when, in my long reveries, I have plunged in anticipation amid the delights of unclouded love! Is the power of desire in our hearts limited, and can it perish by a too great effusion of its substance? After all is said, my life at this moment is a beautiful life, illumined by faith and work and love. Farewell, my friend. I kiss your little ones, and you will, I know, recall to the memory of your good wife

"YOUR ALBERT."

Rosalie read this letter twice and its general purport was engraved on her heart. She was suddenly enabled to penetrate the mystery of Albert's previous life, for her quick intelligence made its details clear

to her from the beginning. By combining this knowledge with the novel published in the *Revue*, she arrived at a complete understanding of Albert's life and character. Naturally she exaggerated the noble proportions of that great heart, of that powerful will; and her love for Albert became a passion whose violence was augmented by all the strength of her youth, the ennui of her solitude and the hidden energy of her character. To love is a result of the laws of nature in a young person; but when the craving for affection is directed toward a man of extraordinary qualities, it receives a reinforcement of enthusiasm which overflows its banks in youthful hearts. So it was that Mademoiselle de Watteville before many days reached a quasi-morbid and very dangerous phase of amorous excitement.

The baroness was very well satisfied with her daughter, who, under the spell of her profound self-absorption, ceased to resist her, seemed to apply herself diligently to her various tasks, and realized her beau ideal of the submissive daughter.

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The advocate at this time was trying two or three cases a week. Although overburdened with business, he attended to his duties at the Palais, looked after the commercial litigation and the *Revue*, and remained a profound mystery, realizing that his influence would be the more genuine, the more mysterious and hidden it was. But he neglected no means of success, studying the list of the electors of Besançon, and looking up their characters, their friendships and enmities and their interests. Did ever a cardinal, striving to be chosen pope, give himself so much trouble?

One evening Mariette, when she came to Rosalie's room to dress her for a party, handed her, not without much inward groaning at the abuse of confidence, a letter whose superscription caused Mademoiselle de Watteville to shudder, and to grow red and white by turns.

TO MADAME LA DUCHESSE D'ARGAIOLO

Née Princesse Soderini

Lago Maggiore BELGIRATE

ITALIE

This address gleamed in her eyes as the *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* must have gleamed in the eyes of

Belshazzar. Having concealed the letter she went downstairs to accompany her mother to Madame de Chavoncourt's. During the evening she was assailed by remorse and scruples of conscience. She had already felt ashamed of having violated the secrecy of Albert's letter to Léopold. She had asked herself many times if the noble-hearted Albert could esteem her, knowing her to be guilty of that crime, which the fact that it must necessarily go unpunished, renders infamous. Her conscience energetically answered: *no!* She had expiated her sin by imposing penances upon herself; she fasted, she mortified the flesh by remaining on her knees, with folded arms, repeating prayers for hours at a time. She had forced Mariette to perform similar acts of repentance. The truest asceticism was mingled with her passion and made it so much the more dangerous.

"Shall I read the letter, or shall I not?" she said to herself as she listened to the prattle of the little De Chavoncourts.—One was sixteen years old and the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie looked upon these two friends of hers as little girls because they were not secretly in love.—"If I read it," she mused, after wavering between yes and no for an hour, "it shall certainly be the last. As I have taken so much pains to find out what he wrote to his friend, why shouldn't I know what he says to *her?* If it is a horrible crime, isn't it a proof of love? O Albert, am I not your wife?"

When Rosalie was in bed, she opened the letter,

which was dated from day to day, thus affording the duchess a faithful picture of Albert's life and emotions.

25th.

"My dear heart, all goes well. I have just added a valuable conquest to those I have previously made: I have rendered a service to one of the men who are most influential in election matters. Like the critics, who make reputations without ever succeeding in making one for themselves, he makes deputies, but never becomes a deputy himself. The good man undertook to manifest his gratitude to me at small expense, almost without loosening his purse-strings, by saying to me:

"'Would you like to go to the Chamber? I can procure your election as deputy.'

"'If I should decide to enter upon a political career,' I replied with unblushing hypocrisy, 'it would be to devote myself to the interests of the Comté, for I am much attached to the province and am appreciated here.'

"'Very good, we'll induce you to stand, and through you we shall have some influence in the Chamber, for you will make your mark there.'

"And so, my beloved angel, whatever you may say, my persistence will gain its crown. In a little while I shall speak from the French tribune to my country, to Europe. My name will be dinned in your ears by the hundred voices of the French press!

"Yes, it is as you say, I was old when I came to Besançon, and Besançon has made me still older; but like Sextus Fifth I shall be young again on the day after my election. I shall enter upon my true life, my proper sphere. Shall we not be upon the same level then? Comte Savaron de Savarus, ambassador to some court, can certainly marry a Princess Soderini, widow of the Duke of Argaiolo! Triumph rejuvenates men whose faculties are preserved by incessant conflict. O my life! with what joy did I rush from my library to my office, to stand before your dear portrait, to which I told the story of my progress before writing to you. Yes, my own votes, the vicar-general's, those controlled by this new client and those of the people I shall find an opportunity to accommodate, make my election certain already.

26th.

"We have entered upon the twelfth year since that blissful evening when, by a glance, the lovely duchess ratified the proscribed Francesca's promise. Ah! my dear, you are thirty-five; the dear duke is seventy-seven, that is to say his age alone is ten years greater than both ours together, and he continues in good health! Give him my compliments. I have almost as much patience as love. Besides, I need a few years more to raise my fortunes to the level of your name. I am light-hearted, you see, and I can laugh to-day! so much for the effect of a hope. Sadness or gaiety, everything comes to me

from you. The hope of success always carries me back to the day following that on which I saw you for the first time, when my life was united to yours as firmly as the earth to the light. *Qual pianto* these last eleven years, for this is the twenty-sixth of December, the anniversary of my arrival at your villa on the Lake of Constance. For eleven years I have been crying after happiness, and you have been shining upon me like a star placed too high for any man to reach!

27th.

"No, my dear, do not go to Milan, remain at Belgirate. Milan terrifies me. I don't like that horrible Milanese custom of talking every evening at La Scala with a dozen people, among whom it's hardly possible that there wouldn't be some one who would whisper soft words to you. To my mind solitude is like the bit of amber in whose bosom an insect lives for ever in its unchangeable beauty. A woman's heart and body thus remain undefiled and retain the form they wore in their youth. Do you regret the *Tedeschi?*

28th.

"Will your statue never be done? I would like to have you in marble, on canvas, in miniature, in every possible shape, to allay my impatience. I am still awaiting the view of Belgirate from the south, and the one from the balcony; those are the only ones I lack. I am so busy that I can say nothing

to you to-day but a mere nothing, but that nothing is everything. Did not God make the world from nothing? My nothing is three words, God's words—*I love you!*

30th.

"Ah! I have received your journal! Thanks for your promptness! so you derived much pleasure from reading the details of our first acquaintance thus translated?—Alas! even though I disguised them, I was terribly afraid of offending you. We had no novels, and a review without novels is a pretty girl without hair. Having naturally but little inventive faculty, and being in despair, I seized upon the only poetic thought in my mind, the only adventure to which my memory clings, I toned it down so that it would bear being written, and I never ceased for one moment to think of you while I was writing the only literary production that will ever come from my heart, I can not say from my pen. Did not the transformation of the fierce Sormano into Gina make you smile?

"You ask me about my health. It is much better than in Paris. Although I work tremendously hard the tranquillity of my surroundings has its influence upon my mind. The thing that fatigues and ages a man, dear angel, is the agony of disappointed vanity, the perpetual irritations of Parisian life, the struggling with ambitious rivals. Tranquillity is like a soothing balsam. If you only knew what pleasure your letter gives me, your dear long letter

in which you describe so fully the most trivial incidents of your life! No, you will never know, you women, how deeply interested a true lover is in such trifles. It gave me the keenest pleasure to see the sample of your new dress! Is it of no importance to me, pray, to know how you are dressed! whether your sublime brow is unclouded? whether our authors divert you? whether Canalis's poems stir your soul? I read the books you read. There is nothing, even to your rowing on the lake, that does not move me to tears. Your letter is lovely, sweet as your heart.

"O my celestial, ever-adored flower! could I have lived without your dear letters which, for eleven years, have sustained me in my difficult path, like a brilliant light, like a sweet perfume, like measured music, like divine sustenance, like everything that comforts and gives charm to life! Do not fail me! If you knew the agony I suffer the day before I should receive them and what torture a delay of a single day causes me! Is she ill? or is *he?* I am between hell and paradise, I go mad! *O mia cara diva,* continue to devote yourself to music, exercise your voice, study. I am enraptured at the thought that our hours are arranged in conformity, so that, although separated by the Alps, we live in exactly the same way. This thought delights my soul and gives me renewed courage. When I argued my first case—I haven't told you this before—I imagined that you were listening to me, and I suddenly felt within me the inspiration that raises a poet above

humanity. If I go to the Chamber, oh! you must come to Paris to be present at my first appearance.

30th, evening.

"My God, how I love you! Alas! I have made too much depend upon my love and my hopes. Any disaster that might capsize that overladen bark would carry away my life! It is three years now since I have seen you, and at the thought of going to Belgirate my heart beats so violently that I am forced to stop.—To see you, to hear that childlike, caressing voice! to feast my eyes on that ivory-white complexion, so brilliant in the light, and beneath which one can divine your noble thoughts! to gaze with admiration at your fingers playing with the keys, to receive your whole soul in a glance, and your heart in the accentuation of an *Oimè!* or an *Alberto!* to walk together among your orange-trees in bloom, to live for a few months in the heart of that divinely beautiful landscape.—That would be life indeed. Oh! what folly to run after power, a name, fortune! Why, everything is at Belgirate; poesy is there, and glory. I ought to have become your intendant, or, as the dear tyrant we cannot hate proposed to me, to have taken up my abode with you as *cicisbeo*—a suggestion which our ardent passion did not permit us to accept. Adieu, my angel; you will forgive me when next I am sad in consideration of this light-hearted effusion let fall like a beam of light from the torch of hope, which has seemed hitherto a mere will-o'-the-wisp."

"How he loves her!" cried Rosalie, dropping the letter which seemed heavy in her hands. "To write in this way after eleven years!—"

"Mariette," said Rosalie to the maid the next morning, "go and put this letter in the post; tell Jérôme that I know all I wanted to know, and bid him serve Monsieur Albert faithfully. We will confess these sins without saying whose letters they were or to whom they were going. I did wrong, I am the only guilty one."

"Mademoiselle has been weeping," said Mariette.

"Yes, and I don't wish my mother to notice it; give me some cold water."

Amid the tempests of her passion, Rosalie often listened to the voice of her conscience. Deeply touched by the marvelous fidelity of those two hearts, she had prayed fervently and said to herself that there was nothing for her to do but to submit, to respect the happiness of two beings worthy of each other, resigned to their fate, awaiting God's will, and meanwhile forbidding themselves to indulge in criminal acts or desires. She felt a better woman, she experienced some internal satisfaction after coming to this decision, inspired by the instinct of uprightness natural to youth. She was encouraged therein by the girlish reflection that she was sacrificing herself for *him!*

"She doesn't know how to love," she thought. "Ah! if it were I, I would sacrifice everything for a man who would love me so. To be loved!—when and by whom shall I be loved? That little

Monsieur de Soulas cares for nothing but my fortune; if I were poor he wouldn't take any notice of me."

"Rosalie, my dear, pray what are you thinking about? You're going over the edge," said the baroness to her daughter, who was making embroidered slippers for the baron.

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Rosalie passed the whole winter of 1834 and 1835 in a state of secret, intense excitement; but in the spring, in April, when she completed her eighteenth year, she said to herself at times that it would be worth while to get the better of a Duchess of Argaiolo. In the silence and solitude the prospect of a contest to that end had rekindled her passion and her evil thoughts. She fostered in advance the development to her romantic audacity by making plans upon plans. Although such characters are exceptional, unfortunately Rosalies are far too numerous, and this story contains a lesson that ought to serve as an example to them. During that winter Albert de Savarus had made tremendous progress in Besançon in a quiet way. Sure of his success he was impatiently awaiting the dissolution of the Chamber. Among the leading lights of the middle class he had made a conquest of one of the *makers* of Besançon, a rich contractor who wielded great influence.

The Romans took a vast amount of pains and spent enormous sums of money to procure an unlimited supply of excellent water for all the cities throughout their empire. At Besançon they drank water from Arcier, a mountain situated at a considerable distance from Besançon. Besançon lies on the inside of a horseshoe curve described by the Doubs. The idea of rebuilding the Roman aqueduct

in order to drink the water the Romans drank in a city watered by the Doubs is one of those absurdities which are possible only in a province where the most exemplary gravity holds sway. If that whim should take root in the Bisontine heart, the city would be obliged to spend large sums, and that expenditure would inure to the profit of the influential contractor. Albert Savaron de Savarus decided that the Doubs was good for nothing but to flow under suspension bridges, and that there was no drinkable water save that from Arcier. Articles appeared in the *Revue de l'Est*, which simply expressed the opinion of the business men of Besançon. Nobles and bourgeois, Louis-Phillipists and legitimists, government and opposition, everybody in short were agreed in their determination to drink the water the Romans drank and to enjoy a suspension bridge. The question of the water from Arcier was the order of the day at Besançon. At Besançon, as in the case of the two railroads to Versailles, as in the case of all existing abuses, there were hidden interests which gave abounding vitality to this idea. The reasonable people—very few in number, by the way—who opposed the project, were called *old fools*. Nothing was talked of but the advocate Savaron's two plans. After eighteen months of toiling underground this ambitious mortal had succeeded in stirring to its depths the one city in France that was the most difficult to move and the most intolerant of strangers; he had reached a point where, to use a vulgar expression, he could order rain or fine

weather, and where he exercised a positive influence without leaving his own rooms. He had solved the strange problem of how to be powerful without popularity. During that winter he won seven lawsuits for ecclesiastics of Besançon. So at times he breathed the air of the Chamber in anticipation. His heart swelled at the thought of his future triumph. This boundless longing, which caused him to bring forward so many different interests; to invent so many motives of action, absorbed the last powers of a mind already strained beyond all measure. People lauded his disinterestedness, and he accepted without comment such fees as his clients chose to give him. But this disinterestedness was moral usury, for he expected a price for it more considerable than all the gold in the world. In October, 1834, with funds furnished by Léopold Hannequin, he had purchased a house that gave him the necessary qualification for election as deputy, on the pretext of rendering a service to a merchant who was in some financial embarrassment. This desirable investment he neither sought nor desired so far as appearances went.

"You are a very remarkable man," said the Abbé de Grancey to him; it was natural that he should watch the advocate and seek to divine his character. On this occasion he had called to introduce a canon who desired to consult the advocate.

"You are a priest who has missed his vocation," he added.

This remark impressed Savarus.

For her part, Rosalie had taken it into her head—a wilful head on a frail, girlish body—to lure Monsieur de Savarus into the salon and introduce him to the social circle of the De Rupt mansion. Her desires did not as yet go beyond seeing Albert and hearing his voice. She had made a compromise with them, so to speak, and a compromise is often no more than a suspension of hostilities.

The Rouxeys, the patrimonial estate of the Wattevilles, was worth ten thousand francs a year net, but in other hands it would have produced much more. The careless management of the baron, whose wife was to have, and had, an income of forty thousand francs, left the Rouxeys in charge of a sort of Master Jacques, an old servant of the Watteville family, named Modinier. Nevertheless, when the baron and baroness wished to go into the country, they went to the Rouxeys, which is very picturesquely situated. The château, the park, everything is the creation of the famous Watteville, who became passionately fond of this magnificent spot in his active old age.

Between two small mountains, whose summits are entirely bare, called the Great and Little Rouxey, in the centre of a defile, closed by the Dent de Vilard, through which the streams from these mountains rush down to join the cool, delicious springs that feed the Doubs, Watteville conceived the plan of building an enormous dam, leaving two waste-weirs for the overflow. Above the dam he obtained a charming lake, and below,

two cascades which joined forces just below their bases and fed a fascinating stream with which he watered the dry, uncultivated valley that was formerly laid waste by the torrent from the Rouxeys. The lake, the valley and its two mountains he enclosed with a wall, and built himself a country-house by the dam, which he had made to cover three acres of ground by adding to it all the earth that had to be removed when he dug the bed of his river and his irrigating canals. When the Baron de Watteville formed the lake above his dam he was the owner of the two Rouxeys, but not of the upper valley which he also inundated—a valley which had always been used as a thoroughfare and which ends in a horseshoe at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. But the savage old fellow was such an object of terror that, so long as he lived, no claim was ever made on behalf of the inhabitants of Riceys, a small village situated on the other side of the Dent de Vilard. When the baron died he had connected the slopes of the two Rouxeys, at the foot of the Dent de Vilard, by a stout wall, in order not to inundate the two valleys which entered the defile of the Rouxeys to the right and left of that peak. He died having thus taken possession of the Dent de Vilard. His successors assumed a sort of protectorate over the village of Riceys and thus continued the usurpation. The old murderer, the old renegade, the old Abbé de Watteville brought his career to an end by planting trees, by building a magnificent road around the flank of one of the two Rouxeys to join the high

road. Appurtenant to the park and the country-house were extensive estates in a wretched state of cultivation, chalets on the two mountains, and primeval forests. It was wild and lonely, with no other keeper than nature, abandoned to the hazards of vegetation, but full of sublime inequalities. Now you can form some idea of the Rouxeys.

It is altogether useless to embarrass this narrative by recounting the prodigious efforts and the stratagems bearing the stamp of genius by which Rosalie attained her object without allowing it to be suspected; suffice it to say that she obeyed her mother when she left Besançon in May, 1835, in an old berlin drawn by two big, fat, hired horses, on her way to the Rouxeys with her father.

Love interprets everything to young girls. When Rosalie left her bed on the morning following her arrival at Rouxeys, and saw from her chamber window the lovely sheet of water over which the smoke-like vapors hovered, floating in among the firs and larches and crawling up the sides of the two peaks to reach their summits, she uttered a cry of admiration.

"*They* fell in love beside a lake! *She* is living by a lake! Certainly a lake is the place for love."

A lake fed by mountain snows has an opal tint and a transparent quality that make it one vast diamond; but when it is confined like that at the Rouxeys between two blocks of fir-covered granite, when all is silence round about—the silence of the

savannahs or the steppes—it extorts from every mouth the cry that Rosalie uttered.

"We owe all this to the famous Watteville!" said her father.

"Upon my word," said the girl, "he determined to earn forgiveness for his sins. Let us take the boat and go to the end of the lake," she added; "we shall get an appetite for breakfast."

The baron sent for two young gardeners who knew how to row, and took with him his prime minister, Modinier. The lake was six acres wide, sometimes ten or twelve, and four hundred acres long. Rosalie soon reached the end of it at the foot of the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of this miniature Switzerland.

"Here we are, Monsieur le Baron," said Modinier, motioning to the two gardeners to make the boat fast; "would you like to come and look?—"

"Look at what?" asked Rosalie.

"Oh! nothing," said the baron. "But you are a discreet girl and we have secrets together, so I can safely tell you what is disturbing my mind: in 1830 trouble began between the village of Riceys and myself, on account of this Dent de Vilard, and I would like to settle it without letting your mother know anything about it; for she's pretty obstinate, she is quite capable of flying into a rage especially when she learns that the mayor of Riceys, a republican, invented this claim to flatter his people."

Rosalie had the courage to disguise her joy, in order to manage her father better.

"What claim?" said she.

"Mademoiselle," said Modinier, "the people of Riceys have long had the right of pasturage and of cutting wood on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now Monsieur Chantonnit, their mayor since 1830, claims that the whole mountain belongs to his commune, and insists that over a hundred years ago they had a right of way over our property.—You understand that in that case we should no longer be on our own land. Then that savage would eventually say what the old inhabitants of Riceys say, that the land under the lake was stolen by the Abbé de Watteville. That means death to the Rouxeys, you know!"

"Alas! my child, between ourselves it is true," said Monsieur de Watteville ingenuously. "This estate is a usurpation confirmed by time. So, in order not to be annoyed about it forever, I would like to propose that we come to an amicable agreement as to my boundaries on this side of the Dent de Vilard, and then I'd build a wall there."

"If you yield an inch to the republic, it will swallow you. It was your place to threaten Riceys."

"That's just what I was saying to monsieur last evening," said Modinier. "But, in order to strengthen my argument, I suggested to him to come and see if there wasn't some trace of a boundary wall on one side or the other, at some level."

For a hundred years past there had been more or less exploitation on both sides of the Dent de Vilard, that sort of party wall between the village of Riceys

and the Rouxeys, but it had had no particular result and had never been carried to extremes. The subject of dispute, being covered with snow during six months of the year, was well calculated to keep the question cool. So nothing less than the ardor breathed into the defenders of the people by the Revolution of 1830 was sufficient to stir up this affair, by means of which Monsieur Chantonnit, mayor of Riceys, hoped to give dramatic interest to his existence upon the tranquil Swiss frontier and to immortalize his administration. Chantonnit, as his name implies, was a native of Neufchâtel.

"My dear father," said Rosalie as they returned to the boat, "I agree with Modinier. If you want to have your way as to the division line on the Dent de Vilard, it is necessary to act with vigor, and to obtain a judgment that will put you out of reach of this Chantonnit's manœuvres. Why should you be afraid, pray? Retain the famous Savaron for your advocate, do it quickly so that Chantonnit may not retain him in behalf of his commune. The man who won the suit of the chapter against the city will surely win that of the Wattevilles against Riceys! Besides," she continued, "the Rouxeys will be mine some day—that day will be postponed as long as possible, I hope—so don't leave me with a lawsuit on my hands. I love this estate and I shall live here often and add to it as much as I can. I will lay out parks on those shores," she said, pointing to the lower slopes of the two Rouxeys, "and I will have some lovely English

flower-gardens there. Let us go to Besançon and not return without Abbé de Grancey, Monsieur Savaron and mother if she chooses to come. Then you can make up your mind what to do; but if I were in your place I should have decided already. Your name is Watteville and you're afraid of a fight! If you lose the lawsuit—why, I will never say a single reproachful word."

"Oh! if you look at it in that light," said the baron, "I'm perfectly willing; I'll see the advocate."

"Besides a lawsuit's very entertaining. It gives a zest to life to have people going and coming and bustling about. Won't you have a thousand things to do before you get to the judges?—We have not seen Abbé de Grancey for more than three weeks, he was so busy!"

"But the whole existence of the chapter was at stake," said Monsieur de Watteville. "Then, too, the archbishop's self-esteem and his conscience and everything that keeps a priest alive was involved in the suit! Savaron doesn't know how much he did for the chapter! he saved its life."

"Listen to me," she whispered; "if you have Monsieur Savaron on your side your case will be as good as won, won't it? Very well, let me give you a piece of advice; you can't get Monsieur Savaron to act for you except through Monsieur de Grancey. If you take my advice we will go together to speak to the dear abbé and not have mother present at the conference, for I know a way to induce him to bring Savaron the advocate to us."

"It will be very hard not to mention it to your mother!"

"Abbé de Grancey will do that later; but you just make up your mind to promise your vote to Savaron at the approaching elections, and you'll see!"

"Go to the polls! take the oath!" cried Baron de Watteville.

"Bah!" said she.

"What will your mother say?"

"Perhaps she'll order you to do it," replied Rosalie, who knew from Albert's letter to Léopold what the vicar-general had undertaken to do.

*

Four days later, the Abbé de Grancey called upon Albert de Savarus very early in the morning, having advised him of his purpose the day before. The old priest came to win over the great advocate to the interests of the Watteville family, a step that shows what tact and shrewdness Rosalie had secretly developed.

"What can I do to serve you, Monsieur le Vicaire-Général?" said Savarus.

The abbé, as he set forth glibly and with admirable simplicity the details of the affair, was listened to with marked coldness by Albert.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," he replied, "it is impossible for me to undertake to defend the interests of the Watteville family, for reasons which you will understand directly. My rôle in this place consists in maintaining the most scrupulous neutrality. I do not choose to take any color, but to remain an enigma until the eve of my election. To try a case for the Wattevilles would be nothing at all at Paris; but here!—Here, where everything is commented on, I should be universally looked upon as the man employed by your Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"What!" said the abbé, "do you suppose you can remain unknown, when the candidates attack one

another on election day? Why then they'll know that your name is Savaron de Savarus, that you have been master of requests, that you're a partisan of the Restoration!"

"On election day," said Savarus, "I shall be all that it's necessary for me to be. I expect to speak at the preliminary meetings—"

"If Monsieur de Watteville and his party should support you, you would have a compact body of a hundred votes, a little more reliable than those you depend on. One can always sow discord among selfish interests, but one cannot separate those who are united by their convictions."

"Deuce take it!" rejoined Savarus, "I love you and can do much for you, my father! Perhaps there are ways of compromising with the devil. Whatever Monsieur de Watteville's case may be, the trial can be postponed until after the elections, by retaining Girardet and steering him properly. I will not undertake to argue the case until the day after my election."

"Do this one thing," said the abbé, "come to the De Rupt house; there's a little lady of eighteen there, who will have a hundred thousand a year in due time, and you can appear to pay court to her—"

"Ah! the young girl I often see on yonder summer-house—"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Rosalie," replied the abbé. "You are ambitious. If you should take her fancy you might be all that an ambitious man longs to be: a minister. A man always becomes a minister

when he combines your marvelous faculties with an income of a hundred thousand francs."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Albert hastily, "if Mademoiselle de Watteville were three times richer than she is, and if she worshiped me, it would be impossible for me to marry her."—

"Are you married?" exclaimed Abbé de Grancey.

"Not at the church, not at the mayor's office," said Savarus, "but morally."

"That's even worse, when one thinks so much of it as you seem to do," rejoined the abbé. "Whatever is not done can be undone. Do not rest your fortune and your plans upon a woman's will, any more than a wise man waits for a dead man's shoes before beginning his journey."

"Let us drop the subject of Mademoiselle de Watteville," said Albert gravely, "and agree upon our facts. For your sake, whom I love and respect, I will try Monsieur de Watteville's case after the elections. Until then his matters will be attended to by Girardet acting under my advice. That is all I can do."

"But there are questions that cannot be decided except by inspection of the localities," said the vicar-general.

"Girardet can go," Savarus replied. "Here in a city that I know so well, I prefer not to venture upon a step calculated to endanger the enormous interests that depend upon my election."

The Abbé de Grancey took his leave of Savarus,

bestowing upon him a shrewd glance whereby he seemed to laugh at the young athlete's determined politics, while admiring his resolution.

"Ah! I have involved my father in a lawsuit, I have struggled so to bring him to this house!" said Rosalie to herself as she watched the advocate in his office from the top of the summer-house on the day following the conference between Albert and Abbé de Grancey, the result of which had been communicated to her by her father; "ah! I have committed deadly sins, and you will not come to our salon, and I shall not hear your melodious voice? You place conditions upon your services when the Wattevilles and the De Rupts request them! Ah well! God knows I would have been content with small blessings; to see you and hear your voice, to go to the Rouxeys with you so that they might be sanctified in my sight by your presence—I asked no more than that—But now, I will be your wife!—Yes, yes, look at *her* portrait, examine *her* salons, *her* chamber, the four sides of *her* villa, the views from *her* gardens. You are waiting for *her* statue! I will make *her* like marble itself to you!—That woman doesn't love. Arts and sciences, literature, singing, music have taken half of her feelings and her intelligence. She is old, too, she's over thirty, and my Albert would be unhappy!"

"What's the matter with you that you stay here, Rosalie?" said her mother breaking in upon her daughter's reflections. "Monsieur de Soulas is in the salon, and he noticed your attitude, which

certainly denotes more profound thought than a girl of your age should indulge in."

"Is Monsieur de Soulas an enemy of thought?" she asked.

"So you were thinking, were you?" demanded Madame de Watteville.

"Why, yes, mamma."

"No, you weren't thinking. You were looking at that advocate's windows with an interest which is neither proper nor modest, and which Monsieur de Soulas of all men ought not to detect."

"Eh! why so?" said Rosalie.

"Why," said the baroness, "it's high time that you should be informed of our plans; Amédée finds you to his liking, and you will be very lucky to be Comtesse de Soulas."

Rosalie turned pale as a lily, but she made no reply to her mother, to such a degree did the violence of her outraged feelings deaden her faculties. But when she stood before the man whom she had begun to hate bitterly an instant before, she mustered up such a smile as ballet-dancers wear in public. She was able to laugh, she had the strength to conceal her rage, which gradually lost its fury, for she determined to use this fat, dull-witted youth to forward her plans.

"Monsieur Amédée," said she, when the baroness went on ahead of them into the garden, making a great show of leaving the young people alone, "didn't you know that Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus is a legitimist?"

"Legitimist?"

"Before 1830 he was master of requests to the Council of State, connected with the office of the president of the Council of Ministers, and high in favor with the Dauphin and Dauphine. It would have been well for you not to speak ill of him; but it would be still better to go to the polls this year, present his name, and prevent poor Monsieur de Chavoncourt from representing the city of Besançon."

"What's the occasion of the sudden interest you take in this Savaron?"

"Monsieur Albert de Savarus, natural son of the Comte de Savarus—oh! pray don't betray the secret of my indiscretion—will be our advocate in the matter of the Rouxeys if he's elected deputy. The Rouxeys will belong to me, so my father tells me; I want to live there, for it's a fascinating place! I should be in despair to see that magnificent creation of the great Watteville destroyed—"

"*Diantre*," said Amédée to himself, as he left the De Rupt mansion, "that girl's no fool."

*

Monsieur de Chavoncourt was a royalist—one of the famous two hundred and twenty-one. And on the morrow of the Revolution of July he preached the salutary doctrine of taking the oath of allegiance and struggling against the existing order of things, after the fashion of the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not well received by the legitimists, who, in defeat, knew no better than to entertain divergent opinions and to rely upon the force of inertia and upon Providence. Being an object of suspicion to his own party, Monsieur de Chavoncourt seemed to the partisans of the government of Louis-Philippe a most excellent choice to make; they preferred the triumph of his moderate opinions to the jubilation of a republican who polled the combined vote of the enthusiasts and the patriots. Monsieur de Chavoncourt, a man much esteemed in Besançon, represented an old parliamentary family; his fortune, amounting to about fifteen thousand francs a year, offended no one, especially as he had a son and three daughters. Fifteen thousand francs a year amount to nothing with such burdens. Now, when the father of a family remains incorruptible under such circumstances, it would be strange if the electors did not esteem him. Electors are as passionately interested in the beau ideal of parliamentary virtue, as the pit

in the portrayal of generous sentiments to which it is little addicted in practice. Madame de Chavoncourt, at this time about forty years old, was one of the beautiful women of Besançon. During the sessions of the Chamber, she lived quietly on one of her estates in the country in order to save enough to meet Monsieur de Chavoncourt's expenses in Paris. In winter she received becomingly one day each week—Tuesday—and she thoroughly understood her duties as mistress of the house. Young Chavoncourt, then twenty-two, and another young gentleman, Monsieur de Vauchelles, not much richer than Amédée, whose college chum he had been, were extremely intimate. They rode together to Granvelle, they sometimes hunted together; they were so well known to be inseparable that people invited them into the country together. Rosalie through her intimacy with the Chavoncourt girls knew that these three young men had no secrets from one another. She said to herself, that, if Monsieur de Soulas did betray her secret, it would be to his two intimate friends. Now, Monsieur de Vauchelles had his plans made for his own marriage, as Amédée had for his: he proposed to marry Victoire, the oldest of the little Chavoncourts, to whom an old aunt was to promise an estate worth seven thousand francs a year and a hundred thousand in cash, in the contract. Victoire was this aunt's goddaughter and favorite. It seemed certain, therefore, that young Chavoncourt and Vauchelles would warn Monsieur de Chavoncourt of the risk he ran from

Albert's pretensions. But this was not enough for Rosalie; she wrote with her left hand to the prefect of the department an anonymous letter signed *A Friend of Louis-Philippe,* in which she told him of the undisclosed candidacy of Monsieur Albert de Savarus, reminding him of the dangerous assistance a royalist orator might afford Berryer, and describing the advocate's crafty conduct at Besançon for the last two years. The prefect was a clever man, a personal enemy of the royalist faction, and devoted from conviction to the government of July—in a word, one of those men of whom they say on Rue de Grenelle, at the Department of the Interior: "We have a good prefect at Besançon." This prefect read the letter and then burned it, as he was requested to do.

Rosalie's object was to cause Albert to fail of election, in order to keep him at Besançon five years more.

The elections in those days were a struggle between the opposing parties, and in order to ensure its triumph, the ministry chose its own ground by selecting its own moment for the struggle. So it happened that the elections were not to take place for three months. When a man waits all his life for an election, the time that passes between the issuance of the order convoking the electoral colleges and the day fixed for the performance of their duties, is a period during which the ordinary affairs of life are in a state of suspense. So Rosalie realized how much latitude Albert's pre-occupation during those

three months would allow her. She induced Mariette—whom, as she afterwards confessed, she promised to take with Jérôme, into her service,—to hand her the letters Albert sent to Italy and those that came to him from that country. And while she was putting these schemes of hers in operation, this amazing creature embroidered slippers for her father with the most guileless air imaginable. Indeed she redoubled her affectation of candor and innocence when she realized what good service her candid and innocent air might render her.

"Rosalie's getting to be a charming girl," said the Baronne de Watteville.

Two months before the election a meeting was held at the house of Monsieur Boucher Senior, attended by the contractor who was counting upon building the bridge and the Arcier waterworks, by Monsieur Boucher's father-in-law, by Monsieur Granet, the influential personage to whom Savarus had rendered some service and who was to propose him as a candidate, by the solicitor Girardet; by the printer of the *Revue de l'Est* and the president of the Tribunal of Commerce. There were at this meeting twenty-seven in all of those persons who are called in the provinces the *bigwigs*. Each of them represented six votes on an average; but, on counting up, the average was increased to ten, for men always begin by exaggerating their influence to themselves. Among these twenty-seven persons the prefect had one man of his own, some false brother who was secretly expecting a favor from the

ministry for himself or some of his kindred. At this first meeting they agreed, with a degree of enthusiasm which no one could have hoped to see at Besançon, to put forward Savaron the advocate as a candidate. Albert was at home waiting for Alfred Boucher to come for him, and talking meanwhile with the Abbé de Grancey, who was deeply interested in this far-reaching ambition. Albert had come to realize the immense talents of the priest, and the priest, moved by the younger man's entreaties, had consented to act as his guide and counselor in this supreme conflict. The chapter did not love Monsieur de Chavoncourt; for his wife's brother-in-law, who was president of the tribunal, had decided the famous lawsuit adversely in the first instance.

"You are betrayed, my dear child," the shrewd and venerable abbé was saying in that calm, sweet voice which elderly priests assume.

"Betrayed!—" cried the lover, with a sharp pain at his heart.

"By whom, I have no idea," replied the priest. "The prefecture is acquainted with your plans, and can read your game. I cannot at this moment advise you. Such matters have to be studied. As far as the meeting this evening is concerned go forward to meet the blows that will be aimed at you. Tell them the whole story of your past life, and in that way you will lessen the effect this discovery might have upon the Bisontines."

"Oh! I expected this," said Savarus in a faltering voice.

"You did not choose to take my advice; you had an opportunity to make your appearance at the De Rupt mansion, and you don't know what you would have gained by so doing—"

"What?"

"The unanimous vote of the royalists, a momentary agreement among them to go to the polls—in short, more than a hundred votes! Adding to those what we call among ourselves the *ecclesiastical vote*, you would not have been absolutely elected perhaps, but you would have occupied the most advantageous position when it came to a ballot. In such case a man makes terms, and succeeds—"

At that moment Alfred Boucher entered, bubbling over with enthusiasm, and made known the decision of the meeting; he found the vicar-general and the advocate calm, serious and unmoved.

"Farewell, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Albert; "we will look into this matter of yours more thoroughly after the elections."

The advocate took Alfred's arm after exchanging a significant grasp of the hand with Monsieur de Grancey. The priest looked after the ambitious youth, whose face wore the sublime expression that a general's face must wear when he hears the first cannon shot of a great battle. He raised his eyes to heaven and left the room, saying:

"What a fine priest he would make!"

*

True eloquence is not found at the bar. The advocate rarely brings into play there the whole force of his soul; were it not so he would die in a very few years. Eloquence is rarely heard in the pulpit to-day; but it is heard at certain sittings of the Chamber of Deputies where the ambitious man stakes everything to win everything; where, stung by a thousand arrows, he bursts forth at a critical moment. But it may be heard even more certainly in the mouths of some privileged beings at the crucial moment when their aspirations are to meet with failure or success, and when they are forced to speak. So it was that, at the meeting in question, Albert Savarus, alive to the necessity of making converts to his cause, displayed all the faculties of his soul, all the resources of his intellect in their fullest development. He entered the salon, without awkwardness or arrogance, gravely, with no sign of weakness or dismay, and displayed no surprise upon finding himself in the presence of some thirty or more persons. The report of the meeting and its decision had already brought some few docile sheep to the fold. Before listening to Monsieur Boucher, who was anxious to deliver a *speech* at him apropos of the resolution of the Boucher committee, Albert requested silence by a sign, and pressed Monsieur Boucher's hand, as if to warn him of a danger that had suddenly arisen.

"My young friend Alfred Boucher has just informed me of the honor that has been conferred upon me. But before this decision becomes irrevocable," said the advocate, "I think it my duty to explain to you who your candidate is, in order to leave you at liberty to withdraw your pledges if my declarations should disturb your consciences."

This exordium had the effect of producing absolute silence. Some of those present deemed this a noble proceeding.

Albert went on to describe his past life, telling them his real name, what he had done under the Restoration, declaring that he had become a new man since his arrival at Besançon and making pledges for the future. This improvised harangue, it was said, kept his audience in breathless excitement. These men, whose interests were so varied, were fairly subjugated by the wonderful eloquence that came rushing forth from the ambitious advocate's heart and soul. Admiration prevented reflection. They understood but one thing, and that was whatever Albert chose to put in their heads.

Was it not better for a city to be represented by one of the men who are destined to govern society from top to bottom, than a mere voting-machine! A statesman is a power in himself; a deputy of mediocre parts, though he be incorruptible, is only a conscience. What a glorious thing for Provence to have divined the power of Mirabeau, to have sent since 1830 the only statesman produced by the Revolution of July!

Under the spell of this eloquence, all who listened to it believed it to be powerful enough to become a magnificent political instrument to be wielded by their representative. They all saw Savarus the minister in Albert Savaron. Divining the secret thoughts of his hearers, the adroit candidate gave them to understand that they would have the first claim to make use of his influence.

This profession of faith, this declaration of ambition, this narrative of his life and character, was, in the opinion of the only man capable of passing judgment upon Savarus, and who has since become one of the shining lights of Besançon, a masterpiece of address, of sentiment, of emotion, of interest, of fascination. The electors were enveloped in the whirlwind. No man ever had such a triumph. But, unfortunately, words, which are a sort of close-range weapon, have only a temporary effect. Reflection kills the word, when the word has not triumphed over reflection. If they had voted then, Albert's name would certainly have headed the poll! For the moment the victory was his. But he must continue to win a similar victory every day for two months. Albert left the meeting with a fast-beating heart. Applauded by the Bisontines, he had achieved the great result of nullifying in advance the unkind remarks which his antecedents might call forth. The business interests of Besançon adopted the advocate Savaron de Savarus as their candidate. Alfred Boucher's enthusiasm, which was contagious at first,

was destined to prove a disadvantage in the long run.

The prefect, dismayed by this triumph, set about counting up the ministerial votes, and succeeded in arranging a secret interview with Monsieur de Chavoncourt, with a view of effecting a coalition in the interests of both. Every day, by some means that Albert could not fathom, the votes of the Boucher committee diminished in number. A month before the election Albert found that he had hardly sixty votes. Nothing could resist the slow pressure of the prefecture. Three or four clever men went about saying to Savarus's clients:

"Will the deputy try your cases and win them for you? will he give you advice? will he settle your disputes and draw up your agreements? You will have him for your slave five years longer if, instead of sending him to the Chamber, you simply give him the hope of going there five years hence."

This argument was the more injurious to Savarus, in that several of the merchants' wives had already used it. The parties who were interested in the matter of the bridge and the Arcier aqueduct did not decline a conference with a shrewd agent of the ministerial party, who proved to them that their interests would be safer with the prefecture than in the hands of an ambitious stranger. Every day resulted in a defeat for Albert, although every day the battle was directed by him, but sold out by his lieutenants—a battle of words and speeches and manœuvring. He dared not call on the

vicar-general and the vicar-general did not make his appearance. Albert rose and went to bed with his brain on fire and fever in his blood. At last came the day of the first struggle, what is called a preliminary meeting, at which the votes are counted, candidates reckon up their chances, and the knowing ones can sometimes forecast success or failure. It is a *hustings* scene, orderly, without a mob, but most impressive: the emotion is none the less profound because it does not find expression in physical force as in England. The English do things with blows of the fist; in France they use blows of the tongue. Our neighbors have a battle; the French play a game of cold-blooded schemes, calmly worked out. The two nations seem to exchange characters in going through with this political process. The radical party had its candidate; Monsieur de Chavoncourt was proposed; then came Albert, who was accused by the radicals and the Chavoncourt committee of being an uncompromising partisan of the Right, a duplicate of Berryer. The ministry had its candidate, a figurehead, who served to hold together the purely ministerial votes. The votes being thus divided, no result was reached. The republican candidate had twenty, the ministry got together fifty, Albert had seventy and Monsieur de Chavoncourt sixty-seven. But the perfidious prefecture had caused thirty of its most devoted adherents to cast their votes for Albert in order to deceive him. Monsieur de Chavoncourt's votes, added to the eighty the prefecture really controlled,

held the key to the situation, if only the prefect could succeed in luring a few votes away from the radical candidate. A hundred and sixty votes were unaccounted for, Monsieur de Grancey's and those of the legitimist party. A preliminary meeting is to an election what a dress rehearsal is to a theatrical performance, the most deceitful thing in the world. Albert Savarus returned home with a brave face, but sick at heart. In the last fortnight he had had the wit, the genius or the good luck to win over two devoted adherents, Girardet's father-in-law, and a very shrewd old merchant to whom Monsieur de Grancey sent him. These two worthy men, acting as his spies, appeared to be his bitterest enemies in the opposite camp. Toward the close of the preliminary meeting they informed Savarus, through Monsieur Boucher, that thirty voters whom they did not know were playing the same part in his ranks, that they themselves were playing with his opponents. A criminal on his way to the scaffold does not suffer what Albert suffered when he returned home from the hall where his future was at stake. The lover in despair, refused to let any one accompany him. He walked through the streets alone between eleven o'clock and midnight.

At one o'clock in the morning Albert, who had not slept for three days, was seated in his library upon a Voltaire easy-chair, his face as pale as if he were dying, his hands listlessly hanging at his sides, in a despairing attitude worthy of the Magdalen. Tears were flowing beneath his long lashes,

tears of the sort that moisten the eyes but do not roll down the cheeks; the mind drinks them up, the fire in the heart consumes them! He was alone and could weep. He saw in the belvedere a white figure that reminded him of Francesca.

"And it is three months since I received a letter from *her!* What has become of her? I did not write to her for two months, but I told her that I should not. Is she ill? O my love! O my life! will you ever know what I have suffered? What a fatal temperament is mine! Have I an aneurism?" he asked himself, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulsations were audible in the silence as if grains of sand were being dropped upon a drum.

At that moment there were three gentle knocks at Albert's door; he hurried to open it, and was near fainting with joy when he saw the vicar-general with a jovial expression, an expression of triumph on his face. He seized the abbé without uttering a word, took him in his arms, pressed him to his heart, letting his head fall on the old man's shoulder. And he became a child once more, he wept as he wept when he learned that Francesca Soderini was married. He gave no sign of his weakness except to this priest, whose face was beaming with hope. The priest had been sublime and no less shrewd than sublime.

"Forgive me, dear abbé, but you have come at one of those supreme moments when the man disappears, for do not deem me a mere vulgar ambitious creature."

"Oh! I know," rejoined the abbé, "you wrote *Ambitious through Love!* Ah! my child, it was a lover's despair that made me a priest in 1786, at twenty-two. In 1788 I was a curé. I know what life is. I have already refused three bishoprics, for I wish to die at Besançon."

"Come and see *her!*" cried Savarus, seizing the candle and leading the abbé into the magnificently-furnished office where the portrait of the Duchess of Argaiolo was hanging; he held the light, so that it fell upon the face.

"She is one of the women who were born to reign!" said the vicar, appreciating the affection for himself that this silent confidence from Albert implied. "But there is a world of pride upon that brow; it is implacable, it would never pardon an affront! It is Michael the archangel, the angel of execution, the inflexible angel—All or nothing! is the motto of such angelic characters. There is something divinely savage in that head!"

"You have rightly divined her character," cried Savarus. "But, my dear abbé, for more than twelve years she has reigned over my life and I haven't a single thought for which to reproach myself—"

"Ah! if you had done as much for God!" said the abbé frankly. "Let us talk of your affairs. For ten days I have been at work for you. If you are a true politician, you will follow my advice this time. You wouldn't be where you are now if you

had gone to the De Rupt house when I told you to; but you will go to-morrow, I will present you there in the evening. The Rouxeys estate is threatened and the case must be tried in two days. The election won't take place for three days. They will take care not to complete the organization of the election committee the first day; we shall have to vote several times and you will succeed when it comes to a vote by ballot—"

"How, pray?"

"By winning the Rouxeys lawsuit you will gain eighty legitimist votes; add these to the thirty I have at my disposal and we have a hundred and ten. Now, as you will still have twenty of the Boucher committee, you will have a hundred and thirty in all."

"Very good," said Albert, "but we need seventy-five more than that."—

"Yes," said the priest, "for all the rest belong to the ministry. But, my dear boy, you have two hundred votes, and the prefecture has only a hundred and eighty."

"I have two hundred votes?"—said Albert, who stood speechless with amazement after jumping to his feet as if impelled by a spring.

"You have Monsieur de Chavoncourt's votes," replied the abbé.

"How so?" queried Albert.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt."

"Never!"

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," the priest repeated coldly.

"But, look, she is implacable!" said Albert, pointing to Francesca.

"You will marry Mademoiselle de Chavoncourt," said the priest coldly, for the third time.

That time Albert understood. The vicar-general did not choose to dip his hands in the plan which seemed at last to smile upon this politician in despair. A word more would have compromised the priest's dignity, his honor.

"You will find Madame de Chavoncourt and her second daughter at the Watteville's to-morrow; you will thank her for what she is to do for you, you will say that your gratitude knows no bounds; in a word, you belong to her, body and soul, your future is henceforth identical with that of her family, you are disinterested, you have so great confidence in yourself that you look upon an election as deputy as a sufficient marriage-portion. You will have a struggle with Madame de Chavoncourt, she will want your word. This evening, my son, contains your whole future. But understand that I have no part in it. I am responsible only for the legitimist votes; I have won over Madame de Watteville, and that means the whole aristocracy of Besançon. Amédée de Soulas and Vauchelles, who will vote for you, have worked upon the young men; Madame de Watteville will look after the old men for you. As for my votes, they are absolutely certain."

"Who then has influenced Madame de Chavoncourt, pray?" asked Savarus.

"Don't ask me any questions," the abbé replied. "Monsieur de Chavoncourt, who has three daughters to be married, is incapable of adding to his fortune. If Vauchelles marries the oldest one without a dowry, because of the old aunt who looks after the finances in the contract, what is he to do with the two others? Sidonie is sixteen and you have a vast treasure in your ambition. Someone told Madame de Chavoncourt that it was better to marry one of her daughters than to send her husband to eat up money at Paris. That someone leads Madame de Chavoncourt, and Madame de Chavoncourt leads her husband."

"Enough, dear abbé! I understand. Once elected deputy, I have someone's fortune to make, and by making it a magnificent one I shall have fulfilled my promise. You have in me a son, a man who will owe his happiness to you. God! what have I done to deserve such true friendship?"

"You won a triumph for the chapter," said the vicar-general with a smile. "Now be as silent as the tomb touching all this. We amount to nothing, we do nothing. If people knew we were interfering with elections we should be eaten raw by the puritans of the Left, who do much worse things, and blamed by some of our own people, who want to do everything themselves. Madame de Chavoncourt doesn't suspect my participation in this arrangement. I have confided in no one but Madame de

Watteville, and we can rely upon her as upon ourselves."

"I will bring the duchess here for you to give us your blessing!" cried the ambitious advocate.

Having shown the venerable priest to the door Albert went to bed wrapped in a sense of power.

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At nine o'clock the following evening, as may be imagined, Madame de Watteville's salons were filled with the Bisontine aristocracy, convoked in extraordinary session! They were discussing the *exceptional* step of going to the polls to gratify the daughter of the De Rupts. They knew that the former master of requests, the secretary of one of the most faithful ministers of the elder branch, was to be presented to them. Madame de Chavoncourt was there with her second daughter Sidonie, arrayed like a goddess, while her first-born, sure of her lover, had recourse to no artifices of the toilette. Such trivial matters are noticed in the provinces. The handsome, clever face of the Abbé de Grancey was seen amid the various groups from time to time listening, apparently taking no part in the discussions, but injecting now and then one of those incisive phrases which summarize a question and decide it.

"If the elder branch should return," he said to a septuagenarian statesman, "what supporters would it find among the politicians?—Berryer, alone on his bench, doesn't know what course to take; if he had sixty votes he could block the government many times and overturn ministries!—They're going to elect the Duc de Fitz-James at Toulouse.—You will help Monsieur de Watteville win his lawsuit!—If

you vote for Monsieur de Savarus, the republicans will vote with you rather than vote with the government!" Etc., etc.

At nine o'clock Albert had not arrived. Madame de Watteville was inclined to look upon such tardiness as an impertinence.

"Dear baroness," said Madame de Chavoncourt, "let us not allow such important matters to depend on a punctilio. A varnished boot that is backward about drying—a consultation—detains Monsieur de Savarus perhaps."

Rosalie looked askance at Madame de Chavoncourt.

"She's very considerate to Monsieur de Savarus!" she said in an undertone to her mother.

"Why there's some talk of a match between Sidonie and Monsieur de Savarus," replied the baroness with a smile.

Rosalie walked abruptly toward a window that looked out on the garden. At ten o'clock Monsieur de Savarus had still not appeared. The storm that had been rumbling in the distance burst. Some noblemen began to play cards, considering it an intolerable insult. The Abbé de Grancey, who did not know what to think, went to the window where Rosalie had hidden herself, and said aloud, so completely puzzled was he:

"He must be dead!"

The vicar-general went out into the garden, followed by Monsieur de Watteville and Rosalie, and all three went up to the belvedere. Everything was

closed in Albert's apartments, no light was anywhere visible.

"Jérôme!" cried Rosalie, spying the servant in the courtyard.

The abbé looked at Rosalie.

"Where's your master?" she asked the servant, who had come to the foot of the wall.

"Gone away, by postchaise, mademoiselle."

"He is ruined," cried Abbé de Grancey, "or happy!"

The joy of triumph was not so quickly banished from Rosalie's face that it was not detected by the vicar-general, who pretended to notice nothing.

"What can be Rosalie's share in this business?" the priest asked himself.

The three returned to the salons where Monsieur de Watteville made known the strange, extraordinary, astounding intelligence of the departure of the advocate, Albert Savaron de Savarus by post without any explanation of the reasons of his disappearance. At half-past eleven no more than fifteen persons remained, among whom were Madame de Chavoncourt and the Abbé de Godenars, another vicar-general, a man of about forty who aspired to be a bishop, the two Mesdemoiselles de Chavoncourt and Monsieur de Vauchelles, Abbé de Grancey, Rosalie, Amédeé de Soulas and a former magistrate who had resigned his office, one of the most influential personages among the aristocracy of Besançon and an earnest advocate of the election of Albert Savarus.

Abbé de Grancey took his place beside the baroness in such a way that he could look at Rosalie, whose face, ordinarily pale, was flushed as by fever.

"What can have happened to Monsieur de Savarus?" said Madame de Chavoncourt.

At that moment a liveried servant brought a letter upon a silver salver to Abbé de Grancey.

"Pray read it," said the baroness.

The vicar-general read the letter and saw that Rosalie suddenly turned as white as her fichu.

"She recognizes the handwriting," said the priest to himself after glancing at the girl over his spectacles.

He folded the letter and coolly put it in his pocket without saying a word. In three minutes he received three glances from Rosalie which were enough to enable him to guess the whole truth.

"She loves Albert de Savarus!" thought the vicar-general.

He rose and Rosalie felt a sudden shock; he bowed, walked toward the door, and in the second salon was overtaken by Rosalie, who said to him:

"Monsieur de Grancey, it is from *Albert.*"

"How do you know his writing well enough to recognize it at such a distance?"

The girl, caught in the toils of her impatience and her wrath, made a reply which the abbé thought sublime.

"Because I love him!—What's the matter with him?" she added after a pause.

"He abandons his candidacy," replied the abbé.

Rosalie placed her finger on her lips.

"I demand secrecy as if I were in the confessional," she said before they returned to the salon. "If there's to be no election, there'll be no marriage to Sidonie!"

The next morning, on her way to mass, Rosalie learned from Mariette a part of the circumstances which led to Albert's disappearance at the most critical moment of his life:

"Mademoiselle, yesterday morning an old gentleman arrived from Paris at the Hotel National in his own carriage, a handsome carriage with four horses, an outrider and a footman. Indeed, Jérôme, who saw the carriage drive away, declares that it couldn't have been anyone but a prince or a milord."

"Was there a crown *fermée* on the carriage?" Rosalie asked.

"I don't know," said Mariette. "Just as the clock struck two he called on Monsieur Savarus and sent up his card, and Jérôme says that when monsieur saw it he turned white as a sheet; then he said to show him in. As he himself closed the door and locked it, it's impossible to find out what the old gentleman and the advocate said to each other; but they remained together about an hour; after that the old gentleman and the advocate sent for the footman. Jérôme saw the footman come out of the room with an enormous package, four feet long, that looked like a great picture on canvas. The old

gentleman had a big bundle of papers in his hand. The advocate was paler than death and, proud and dignified as he always is, he was in a pitiable state. —But he treated the old gentleman as respectfully as he could have done if he'd been the king. Jérôme and Monsieur Albert Savaron accompanied the old man to his carriage, which was waiting with four horses all harnessed to it. The outrider started on the stroke of three. Monsieur went straight to the prefecture and from there to Monsieur Gentillet's, who sold him the late Madame Saint-Vier's old traveling calèche; then he ordered post-horses for six o'clock. He returned to his rooms to pack his trunks, and he must have written several letters; last of all he settled up his business matters with Monsieur Girardet, who called on him and stayed till seven. Jérôme carried a line to Monsieur Boucher's, where monsieur was expected to dinner. Then, at half-past seven, he went away leaving Jérôme three months' wages and telling him to look for a place. He left his keys with Monsieur Girardet, after driving him home, and, as Jérôme says, taking a plate of soup with him, for Monsieur Girardet hadn't dined at half-past seven. When Monsieur Savaron returned to the carriage he was like a dead man. Jérôme, who naturally waited to say adieu to his master, heard him say to the postilion: 'The Geneva road.' "

"Did Jérôme inquire the stranger's name at the Hotel National?"

"As the old gentleman only stopped there in

passing they didn't ask him his name. The servant, by order no doubt, acted as if he couldn't speak French."

"And what about the letter Abbé de Grancey received so late?" said Rosalie.

"Monsieur Girardet must have sent it to him; but Jérôme says that poor Monsieur Girardet, who is very fond of Savaron, was quite as overcome as he. He who comes mysteriously, goes away mysteriously, Mademoiselle Galard says."

After hearing this narrative Rosalie's manner was pensive and absorbed to a degree that was perceptible to everybody. It is useless to mention the rumors to which Savaron's disappearance gave rise in Besançon. It was known that the prefect put himself out to provide him with a foreign passport instantly, with the best grace in the world, for in this way he got rid of his only real opponent. The next day Monsieur de Chavoncourt was elected on the first vote, by a majority of a hundred and forty.

"Jean went away as he came," said an elector when he learned of Albert Savaron's flight.

This event added strength to the prevailing prejudice against strangers in Besançon, which had been abundantly demonstrated two years before apropos of the affair of the republican newspapers. Ten days passed and Albert de Savarus's name ceased to be mentioned. Three persons only, Girardet the solicitor, the vicar-general and Rosalie, were seriously affected by his disappearance.

Girardet knew that the white-haired stranger was Prince Soderini, for he saw the card and told the vicar-general; but Rosalie, who was much better informed than they, had known for three months of the death of the Duke of Argaiolo.

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In the month of April, 1836, no one had heard aught of Albert de Savarus, nor had his name been mentioned. Jérôme and Mariette were to be married; but the baroness had confidentially suggested to her maid to wait for Rosalie's marriage, so that the two weddings might take place together.

"It is time for Rosalie to be married," said the baroness one day to Monsieur de Watteville; "she's nineteen and she has changed these last few months in a way to frighten one—"

"I don't know what's the matter with her," said the baron.

"When fathers don't know what the matter is with their daughters, mothers can sometimes guess," said the baroness; "she must be married."

"I am perfectly willing," said the baron, "and for my part I'll give her the Rouxeys, now that the tribunal has settled my dispute with the commune of Riceys by fixing my boundary line three hundred metres from the base of the Dent de Vilard. They're digging a ditch there to receive all the water and carry it into the lake. The commune didn't appeal, so the decision is final."

"You haven't yet discovered," said the baroness, "that that decision cost me thirty thousand francs which I paid Chantonnit. The peasant wouldn't take any less, he gets all the credit of winning the

battle for his village, and he has sold us peace. If you give up the Rouxeys, you won't have anything left."

"I don't need much," said the baron, "I'm near the end—"

"You eat like an ogre."

"That's just it: it does me no good to eat, and I feel that my legs are growing weaker and weaker."

"It's your turning," said the baroness.

"I don't know," said the baron.

"We'll marry Rosalie to Monsieur de Soulas; if you give her the Rouxeys, reserve the use of the estate for your life; I will give them twenty-four thousand a year in the funds. Our children will live here and I don't see that they're much to be pitied."

"No, I'll give them the Rouxeys outright. Rosalie loves the Rouxeys."

"You act strangely with your daughter! You don't ask me if I love the Rouxeys?"

Rosalie, being summoned in hot haste, learned that she was to marry Monsieur Amédée de Soulas early in May.

"I thank you, mother, and you, father, for thinking about getting me settled, but I don't want to marry; I am very happy to be with you—"

"Stuff!" exclaimed the baroness, "you don't love Monsieur le Comte de Soulas, that's the whole story."

"If you want to know the truth, I will never marry Monsieur de Soulas—"

"Oh yes! the *never* of a girl of nineteen!" retorted the baroness smiling bitterly.

"The *never* of Mademoiselle de Watteville!" said Rosalie with emphasis. "I don't think my father has any intention of marrying me against my will?"

"Oh! no, indeed," said the poor baron, with an affectionate glance at his daughter.

"Very well," rejoined the baroness, curtly, restraining the natural wrath of a devotee amazed to meet with defiance from an unexpected quarter, "you can look after your daughter's establishment yourself, Monsieur de Watteville!—Think well of it, Rosalie; if you don't marry to suit me, you shall have nothing from me toward your fortune."

The quarrel thus begun between Madame de Watteville and the baron, who upheld his daughter, went so far, that Rosalie and her father were obliged to pass the summer at the Rouxeys; life at the De Rupt mansion was unendurable. It became known in Besançon that Mademoiselle de Watteville had positively refused Monsieur le Comte de Soulas. After their marriage Jérôme and Mariette went to the Rouxeys, to step into Modinier's shoes some day. The baron repaired and restored the house in accordance with his daughter's taste. When she learned that this work of restoration cost sixty thousand francs and that Rosalie and her father were building a hothouse, the baroness became aware that there was some leaven of malice in her daughter's nature. The baron bought several contiguous fields and a small estate worth about thirty thousand

francs. Madame de Watteville was told that her daughter, away from her, was showing herself to be an extremely capable girl; she was making a study of methods of improving the Rouxeys, she had donned a riding-habit and was accustomed to ride about on horseback; her father, who was very happy with her, who never complained of his health and was growing stout, accompanied her in her excursions. When the baroness's birthday drew near —her name was Louise—the vicar-general came to the Rouxeys, commissioned doubtless by Madame de Watteville and Monsieur de Soulas to negotiate a treaty between the mother and daughter.

"That little Rosalie has a head on her shoulders," people said in Besançon.

Having nobly paid up the ninety thousand francs expended at the Rouxeys, the baroness would send her husband about a thousand francs a month to enable him to live there; she did not choose to put herself in the wrong. The father and daughter asked nothing more than to return to Besançon on the fifteenth of August, to remain there until the end of the month. When the vicar-general, after dinner, took Rosalie aside to broach the subject of her marriage, giving her to understand that she must not count upon Albert, who had not been heard from for a year, he was stopped short by a gesture from her. The strange creature seized Monsieur de Grancey's arm and led him to a bench under a clump of rhododendrons, whence they could look out upon the lake.

"Listen, dear abbé, whom I love as dearly as my father, because you are fond of my Albert,—the time has come when I must confess to you; I have committed crimes in order to be his wife, and he must be my husband. Look, read this!"

She handed him a copy of the gazette which she took from the pocket of her apron, and pointed to the following article, dated Florence, May 25:

"The wedding of Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, eldest son of Monsieur le Duc de Chaulieu, the former ambassador, and Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, born Princess Soderini, was celebrated with much splendor. Numerous festivities, given on the occasion of this wedding, impart animation to the city of Florence at the present moment. The fortune of Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo is one of the most considerable in Italy, for the late duke constituted her his sole legatee."

"The woman he loved is married," said she; "I separated them!"

"You!—how, in Heaven's name?" exclaimed the abbé.

Rosalie was about to reply, when a loud outcry from two gardeners, preceded by the sound of a body falling into the water, interrupted her; she rose and rushed away, crying:

"Oh! my father!—"

The baron was not to be seen.

In attempting to lift a fragment of granite on which he thought he could detect the impression of a shell—a fact that would have upset some geological theory—Monsieur de Watteville had ventured

upon the sloping bank, lost his balance, and rolled down into the lake, which was naturally deepest at the foot of the dike. The gardeners had infinite difficulty in thrusting a pole within the baron's reach by feeling about in the spot where the water was disturbed; but at last they drew him out covered with mud, into which he had plunged head-foremost and had buried himself still deeper by struggling. Monsieur de Watteville had dined heartily, his digestion had begun and was interrupted. When he had been undressed, washed clean and put to bed, it was so evident that he was in a dangerous condition that one servant was hurried on horseback to Besançon, another to fetch the nearest physician and surgeon.

When Madame de Watteville arrived, eight hours after the accident, with the leading physician and surgeon of Besançon, they found Monsieur de Watteville in a desperate plight, notwithstanding the skilful ministrations of the physician from Riceys. The fright caused an effusion of serum in the brain and the arrested digestion gave the poor baron his *coup de grace.*

His death, which would not have taken place, said the baroness, if her husband had remained at Besançon, was attributed by her to her daughter's obstinacy, and she conceived an aversion for her while abandoning herself to sorrow and regret that were evidently exaggerated. She called the baron *her dear lamb!* The last Watteville was buried on an islet in the lake at the Rouxeys, where the

baroness erected a small gothic monument in white marble, like the one said to mark the grave of Héloïse at Père Lachaise.

A month after this catastrophe the baroness and her daughter were living in the Du Rupt mansion in morose silence. Rosalie was the victim of a poignant sorrow, which sought no outlet; she accused herself of her father's death and suspected another disaster, even greater in her eyes, and most certainly caused by her, for neither Girardet the solicitor nor the Abbé de Grancey obtained the slightest clue to Albert's fate. This silence was appalling. In a paroxysm of remorse she felt that she must confess to the vicar-general the ghastly scheme by which she had separated Francesca from Albert. It was simple and horrifying. Mademoiselle de Watteville had suppressed Albert's letters to the duchess and that in which Francesca told her lover of her husband's illness and that she could not answer his letters during the time that she must devote herself, as her duty required, to the dying man. Thus, during Albert's preoccupation over the elections the duchess wrote him only two letters, the one in which she told him of the Duke of Argaiolo's dangerous condition, and that in which she told him that she was a widow—two noble, sublime letters which Rosalie kept. After several nights' work Rosalie had succeeded in imitating Albert's handwriting to perfection. For that faithful lover's genuine letters she had substituted three letters, copies of which, when they were shown to the old priest,

made him shudder, the genius of evil was so manifest therein in its most perfect development. Rosalie, holding the pen for Albert, prepared the duchess for a change of heart on the part of the falsely unfaithful Frenchman. Rosalie responded to the news of the Duke of Argaiolo's death with the news of Albert's approaching marriage to herself, Rosalie. The two letters should have crossed and did actually cross each other. The infernal ingenuity with which these letters were written so astounded the vicar-general that he read them a second time. To the last, Francesca, wounded to the heart by a girl who was seeking to destroy her rival's love, made no other reply than these words: "You are free, adieu."

"Purely moral crimes, which give human justice nothing to lay hold upon, are the most infamous, the most hateful," said Abbé de Grancey sternly. "God often punishes them on earth: therein lies the explanation of many frightful catastrophes which seem to us inexplicable. Of all secret crimes shrouded in the mystery of private life, one of the most dishonoring is the crime of breaking the seal of a letter or reading it surreptitiously. Any person, whoever he may be, or by whatever motive impelled, who allows himself to commit such a deed, thereby inflicts an ineradicable stain upon his honor. Do you realize all that there is touching, divine in the story of the young page, falsely accused, who was himself the bearer of a letter containing the order to put him to death, who set out on his mission

without thought of evil, and whom Providence thereupon took under its protection and saved miraculously, as we say?—Do you know wherein the miracle consists? Virtue has a halo as powerful as that of innocent childhood. I say these things to you with no purpose to reprimand you," said the old priest with profound sadness. "Alas! I am not acting now as one qualified to admonish and to give absolution; you are not kneeling at God's feet; I am a friend, dismayed by my apprehension of the punishment in store for you. What has become of poor Albert? has he not taken his own life? An incredible violence of feeling was concealed beneath his assumed tranquillity. I understand that old Prince Soderini, Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo's father, came here to demand his daughter's letters and portrait. That was the thunderbolt that fell upon Albert's head, and he doubtless tried to go to her and set himself right.—But how is it that in fourteen months he has made no sign?"

"Oh! if I marry him, he will be so happy—"

"Happy?—He doesn't love you. Nor have you such a great fortune to offer him. Your mother has a most profound aversion for you, you made a savage retort to her that wounded her to the quick and will ruin you."

"What was that?" said Rosalie.

"When she said to you yesterday that obedience was the only way to atone for your wrong-doing, and reminded you of the necessity of marrying, in connection with Amédée: 'if you're so fond of him,

marry him yourself, mother!' Did you, or did you not throw that remark at her head?"

"Yes," said Rosalie.

"Very good," rejoined Monsieur de Grancey, "I know her; in a few months she will be Comtesse de Soulas! She will have children, never fear, and she will give Monsieur de Soulas forty thousand francs a year; over and above that she'll provide for him in her will and cut down your share in her real estate as much as she can. You'll be poor as long as she lives and she's only thirty-eight! Your property will consist of nothing but the Rouxeys estate and what little is left for you after the settlement of your father's estate, if indeed your mother agrees to waive her claim upon the Rouxeys! From the standpoint of your material interests, you have managed your life badly enough; from the standpoint of your sentiments I think it is altogether ruined—Instead of turning to your mother—"

Rosalie shook her head savagely.

"To your mother," repeated the vicar-general, "and to your religion, which, when your heart felt the first impulse, would have enlightened and advised and guided you, you chose to follow your own path, knowing nothing of life and listening only to the voice of passion."

These sensible words terrified Rosalie.

"What must I do?" she asked after a pause.

"To undo the injury you have done, I must know the extent of it," said the abbé.

"Well, I will write to the only man who is likely to have information concerning Albert's fate, Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, a notary at Paris and his friend from childhood."

"Write no more except to do homage to the truth," replied the vicar-general. "Entrust to me the genuine letters and the false ones, make your confession to me in detail, as to the director of your conscience, asking me by what means you can expiate your sins, and leaving yourself in my hands. I will see —But, first of all, prove the unhappy fellow's innocence to the being of whom he made his god on earth. Even after his happiness is gone forever Albert will rejoice in his justification."

Rosalie promised to obey Abbé de Grancey, hoping that what he was about to do would perhaps result in bringing Albert back to her.

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SAVARUS AT THE WEDDING

When Albert finally succeeded in meeting Madame d'Argaiolo, it was at Florence, just when her wedding was taking place. Our poor friend fainted in the church, and has never been able, even when he was at death's door, to obtain an explanation from that woman, who must have an extraordinary something in place of a heart.

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A short time after Rosalie's confidence, one of Monsieur Léopold Hannequin's clerks came to Besançon provided with a general power of attorney from Albert, and called first of all upon Monsieur Girardet to request him to sell Monsieur Savaron's house. The solicitor undertook the commission out of friendship for the advocate. The clerk sold the furniture, and with the proceeds was able to pay what Albert owed Girardet, who, at the time of his mysterious departure, had handed him five thousand francs and agreed to collect what sums were due him. When Girardet asked what had become of the handsome, noble-hearted wrestler in whom he had become so deeply interested, the clerk replied that his master alone knew, and that the notary had seemed to be keenly afflicted by the contents of the last letter written by Monsieur Albert de Savarus.

Upon receiving this information the vicar-general wrote to Léopold. The worthy notary replied as follows:

TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE GRANCEY, VICAR-GENERAL OF THE DIOCESE OF BESANÇON.

"Paris.

"Alas! monsieur, no man has the power to restore Albert to the life of the world; he has turned his back upon it. He is a novice at the Grande-Chartreuse, near Grenoble. You know better than I, who have just learned it, that every man dies on the threshold of that cloister. Anticipating my visit,

Albert interposed the general of the Carthusians between all my efforts and himself. I know that noble heart well enough to know that he is the victim of an infamous plot, invisible to us; but everything is at an end. Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, now Duchesse de Rhétoré, seems to me to have carried her cruelty to great lengths. At Belgirate, which place she had left when Albert hurried thither, she had left orders intended to make him believe that she was living in London. From London, Albert followed his mistress to Naples, and from Naples to Rome, where she contracted her engagement with the Duc de Rhétoré. When Albert finally succeeded in meeting Madame d'Argaiolo, it was at Florence, just when her wedding was taking place. Our poor friend fainted in the church, and has never been able, even when he was at death's door, to obtain an explanation from that woman, who must have an extraordinary something in place of a heart. For seven months Albert traveled about in pursuit of a barbarous creature who played a game of eluding him; he knew not how or where to seize her. I saw our poor friend on his way through Paris; and if you had seen him as I did you would have realized that not a word must be said to him on the subject of the duchess, unless one wished to bring on a paroxysm in which his reason would have been endangered. If he had known what his crime was, he might have found a way to justify himself; but to be falsely accused of having married! What was he to do? Albert is dead, absolutely dead, to the world. He longed for rest; let us hope that profound silence and prayer, wherein he has taken refuge, will bring him happiness in another form. If you have known him, monsieur, you may well pity him and pity his friends also!

"Accept, etc."

As soon as the good vicar-general received this letter he wrote to the general of the Carthusians, and this was Albert Savarus's reply:

BROTHER ALBERT TO MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ DE GRANCEY, VICAR-GENERAL OF THE DIOCESE OF BESANÇON.

"Grande-Chartreuse, November, 1836.

"I recognized your tender and ever-youthful heart, dear and beloved vicar-general, in all that the reverend father, the general of our order, has just read to me. You have divined the only longing that remains hidden in the deepest recesses of my heart, relative to the things of this world: to cause her who has used me so ill to do justice to my sentiments! But, while leaving me at liberty to avail myself of your offer, the general desired to know if I was sure of my calling; he had the extreme kindness to tell me his thoughts when he saw that I had determined to maintain absolute silence in that regard. If I had yielded to the temptation to rehabilitate the man of the world, the monk would have been cast out of this monastery. That signal favor certainly did its work, but the battle, though short, was none the less desperate and cruel. Need I say more to show you that I cannot think of returning to the world? Therefore, the forgiveness you seek for the author of so much misery is granted freely and without any thought of anger. I will pray that God may deign to forgive the young woman as I forgive her, just as I will pray God to grant a happy life to Madame de Rhétoré. Ah! whether it be death or the persistent hand of a young girl desperately bent upon winning a man's love, or whether it be one of those blows which are attributed to chance, must not God be always obeyed? In certain hearts misfortune creates a vast desert, wherein the voice of God is heard. I have learned too late the connection between this life and that which awaits us, for everything about me is worn out. I should not have been able to serve in the ranks of the church militant, so I throw myself for what remains of an almost extinct life at the foot of the sanctuary. This is the last time I shall write. No other than you, who loved me and whom I

loved so well, could have made me break the law of oblivion I imposed upon myself when I entered the metropolis of Saint-Bruno. You will be particularly remembered in the prayers of

"BROTHER ALBERT."

"Perhaps it's all for the best," said Abbé de Grancey to himself.

When he had shown this letter to Rosalie, who piously kissed the passage containing her pardon, he said to her:

"Well, now that he is lost to you, won't you make peace with your mother by marrying the Comte de Soulas?"

"Albert must order me to do it," she replied.

"You see that it's impossible to consult him. The general wouldn't allow it."

"Suppose I were to go and see him?"

"The Carthusians don't receive visitors. Besides, no woman, except the Queen of France, can enter the Chartreuse," said the abbé. "So there's nothing now to prevent you marrying young Monsieur de Soulas."

"I don't want to make my mother unhappy," Rosalie retorted.

"Satan!" cried the vicar-general.

Toward the close of that winter the excellent Abbé de Grancey died. That faithful friend was no longer at hand to stand between Madame de Watteville and her daughter, those two iron wills. The event predicted by the vicar-general came to

pass. In August, 1837, Madame de Watteville married Monsieur de Soulas at Paris, whither she went on the advice of Rosalie, who was kind and lovely to her mother. Madame de Watteville believed in her daughter's affection; but Rosalie simply wished to visit Paris in order to indulge in the pleasure of an atrocious vengeance: she thought of nothing but avenging Savarus by making a martyr of her rival.

Mademoiselle de Watteville had been emancipated; indeed she would soon have completed her twenty-first year. Her mother, to settle accounts with her, had abandoned her claim upon the Rouxeys, and the daughter had given her mother a release of all claim to the Baron de Watteville's estate. Rosalie had encouraged her mother to marry the Comte de Soulas and to provide liberally for him.

"Let us both be free," she said to her.

Madame de Soulas, feeling some uneasiness as to her daughter's intentions, was amazed at this noble conduct; she presented Rosalie with six thousand francs a year in the funds to quiet her conscience. As Madame la Comtesse de Soulas had forty-eight thousand a year in real estate, from land, and was powerless to alienate any part of it with a view of diminishing Rosalie's share, Mademoiselle de Watteville was still an heiress to the extent of eighteen hundred thousand francs: with some improvements the Rouxeys might be made to produce twenty thousand francs a year besides the value of the dwelling house, the rents and its appurtenances.

Thus Rosalie and her mother, who readily adopted the manners and fashions of Paris, were soon introduced into the best circles.

The golden key—the words: *eighteen hundred thousand francs!*—embroidered upon Rosalie's corsage, served the Comtesse de Soulas much better than her airs à la De Rupt, her misplaced pride, or even her somewhat far-fetched genealogies.

About the month of February, 1838, Rosalie, to whom many young men were assiduously paying court, executed the project that brought her to Paris. She desired to meet the Duchesse de Rhétoré, to see that marvelous woman and to plunge her into everlasting remorse. So Rosalie's achievements in self-adornment and coquetry, in her endeavor to place herself upon a footing of equality with the duchess, were simply bewildering. The first meeting took place at the ball given annually since 1830 for the pensioners of the old Civil List.

A young man, incited by Rosalie, said to the duchess, pointing to her as he spoke:

"There's a most remarkable young woman, a clever creature! She drove a man of very great talent, Albert de Savarus, whose whole life was ruined by her, into a convent, the Grande-Chartreuse. That's Mademoiselle de Watteville, the famous heiress of Besançon."

The duchess turned pale; Rosalie exchanged with her one of those glances which, from woman to woman, are more deadly than pistol shots in a duel. Francesca Soderini, who had a suspicion that Albert

was innocent, immediately left the ball room, turning her back abruptly upon her interlocutor, who had no means of guessing the terrible wound he had inflicted on the lovely Duchesse de Rhétoré.

"If you wish to know more about Albert, come to the Opera ball next Tuesday, and carry a marigold in your hand."

This anonymous note, sent by Rosalie to the duchess, lured the unhappy Italian to the ball, where Rosalie placed in her hand all Albert's letters, the one written by the vicar-general to Léopold Hannequin, with the notary's reply, and that in which she made her confession to Monsieur de Grancey.

"I didn't want to be the only one to suffer, for we have been equally cruel!" she said to her rival.

Having enjoyed to the full the stupefaction depicted upon the duchess's beautiful face, Rosalie made her escape; she appeared no more in society, but returned with her mother to Besançon.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who lives alone on her estate, the Rouxeys, riding, hunting, refusing her two or three offers a year, coming to Besançon four or five times during the winter, intent upon developing her estate, is looked upon as an extremely original person. She is one of the celebrities of the East.

Madame de Soulas has two children, a boy and a girl; she has grown younger, but young Monsieur de Soulas has aged considerably.

"My fortune costs me dear," he said to young Chavoncourt. "To know a devotee thoroughly, one must be unlucky enough to marry her."

Mademoiselle de Watteville behaves like a most extraordinary young woman. People say of her: *She is crotchety.* She goes every year to look at the walls of the Grande-Chartreuse. Perhaps she proposes to imitate her grand-uncle by climbing the wall of the convent to seek her husband, as Watteville climbed the wall of his monastery to recover his liberty.

In 1841 she left Besançon, intending, so it was said, to marry; but no one knows the real motive of that journey, from which she returned in a plight that made it impossible for her ever to reappear in society. By one of those strokes of chance to which the old Abbé de Grancey alluded, she happened to be upon the Loire in a steamboat whose boiler exploded. Mademoiselle de Watteville was so cruelly injured, that she lost her right arm and her left leg; her face bears terrible scars which have robbed it of its beauty; her health, subjected to a horrible shock, leaves her but few days without suffering. In fact, to-day she never goes outside her country-house at the Rouxeys, where she leads a life entirely given over to religious observances.

Paris, May, 1842.

A DAUGHTER OF EVE

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE BOLOGNINI. NÉE VIMERCATI

If you remember, madame, the pleasure your conversation afforded a certain traveler by reminding him of Paris at Milan, you will not be surprised to find him testifying his gratitude for the many pleasant evenings passed in your company, by laying one of his books at your feet, and soliciting for it the protection of your name—a name which heretofore protected several tales of one of your old authors, dear to the hearts of the Milanese. You have an Eugénie, beautiful even now, whose thoughtful smile assures us that she will inherit from you the most precious gifts of woman, and will assuredly enjoy in her childhood all the delights which a sad-visaged mother refused to the Eugénie who figures in this story. You see that, even though the French are accused of fickleness and forgetfulness, I am a true Italian in constancy and faithful memory. As I wrote the name of Eugénie my thoughts often carried me back to the freshly stuccoed salon and the little garden, at the *Vicolo dei Capuccini,* which heard the dear child's joyous laughter and our quarrels and our anecdotes. You have left the *Corso* for the *Tre Monasteri;* I have no idea how you are situated

there and I am compelled to think of you, no longer amid the lovely things which doubtless still surround you there, but as one of the lovely figures conceived by Carlo Dolci, Raphael, Titian or Allori, which seem like mere abstractions, they are so far removed from us.

If this book succeed in passing across the Alps, it will bear witness to the lively gratitude and respectful friendship of

Your humble servant,

DE BALZAC.

A DAUGHTER OF EVE

*

In one of the finest houses on Rue Neuve-des-Mathurins, at half-past eleven in the evening, two women were sitting in front of the fire in a boudoir hung with blue velvet of soft, changing hues, such as French manufacturers have only of late years learned to make. At the doors and windows one of those upholsterers who are at the same time true artists, had draped soft clinging cashmere curtains of the same shade of blue as the hangings on the wall. A silver lamp, studded with turquoises, was suspended from a lovely piece of rose-work in the centre of the ceiling by three chains of beautiful workmanship. The decorative scheme was extended to the smallest details; even the ceiling itself was of blue silk with white cashmere stars, and from it long bands of white cashmere fell in graceful folds upon the wall at equal intervals, held in place by knots of pearls. The feet met the warm texture of a Brussels carpet, thick and soft as turf, and with bunches of blue flowers strewn upon a gray ground. The furniture was of carved violet-wood, after the finest designs of the olden time, and its rich, warm tones relieved the lack of character

in the decoration, which a painter would have called a little too *flat.* The backs of the chairs and couches were like thin sheets of a beautiful white silk material with raised blue flowers, boldly framed by foliage artistically carved in the wood. On either side of the window a cabinet displayed its thousand and one priceless trifles, the flowers of the mechanical arts blossoming under the burning rays of thought. Upon the mantel of dark blue marble the wildest creations in Saxon porcelain, shepherds on their way to never-ending wedding-feasts with delicate nosegays in their hands—Chinese ideas executed in Germany—surrounded a platinum clock inlaid with arabesques. Above gleamed the beveled edges of a Venetian mirror, in an ebony frame laden with figures in bas-relief, a relic of some old royal residence. Two jardinières displayed the sickly splendor of the hothouse, pale-hued and divinely beautiful flowers, the pearls of the botanist's art. In this cold, orderly boudoir, as neat and clean as if it had been for sale, you would have looked in vain for the capricious, roguish disorder which speaks of happiness. Everything there was in harmony, for the two women were weeping. Everything in the room seemed to be in agony.

The name of the proprietor, Ferdinand du Tillet, one of the wealthiest bankers in Paris, is a sufficient justification for the immoderate extravagance noticeable in this mansion, of which the boudoir we have described may serve as an illustration. Although without family, although a self-made man—God

knows how!—Du Tillet had married in 1831 the youngest daughter of the Comte de Granville, one of the most illustrious names in the French magistracy, who became a peer of France after the Revolution of July. This marriage of ambition was purchased by the bridegroom's acknowledging in the contract the receipt of a marriage-portion he did not obtain, as large as that of the bride's older sister, who was married to Comte Félix de Vandenesse. Now, the Granvilles had brought about the alliance with the Vandenesse family solely by the immensity of the marriage-portion. Thus the bank repaired the breach made in the magistracy by the nobility. If the Comte de Vandenesse could have looked forward three years and seen himself the brother-in-law of one Ferdinand, *called* Du Tillet, he might not have married his wife perhaps; but who could have foreseen, in the latter part of 1828, the extraordinary overturn in the political condition, the fortunes and the moral state of France that the year 1830 was destined to bring about? That man would have been deemed insane who should have told Comte Félix de Vandenesse that in that transformation scene he would lose his peer's coronet only to find it again upon his father-in-law's head.

Seated upon one of the low chairs called *chauffeuses*, in the attitude of one listening attentively, Madame du Tillet was holding her sister, Madame Félix de Vandenesse, close to her heart, and from time to time kissing her hand. In society the baptismal

name was added to the family name in order to distinguish the countess from her sister-in-law, the marchioness, wife of the one-time ambassador, Charles de Vandenesse, who had married the wealthy widow of the Comte de Kergarouët, a Mademoiselle de Fontaine. Half-lying upon a small sofa, with a handkerchief in her disengaged hand, her breathing broken by repressed sobs and her eyes swimming with tears, the countess had been confiding to her sister such things as are confided only by one sister to another when they love each other; and these two sisters did love each other dearly. We live in a time when it would be so common an occurrence for two sisters thus strangely married not to love each other, that an historian is bound to set forth the reasons of their affection, which had endured without break or impairment notwithstanding the mutual contempt of their husbands for each other and constant family discord. A rapid glance at their early years will make clear their respective positions.

Brought up in a gloomy mansion in the Marais by a devout woman of limited intellectual powers, who, *being impregnated with her duties*—the classic phrase—had fulfilled the first obligation of a mother to her daughters—Marie-Angélique and Marie-Eugénie entered the married state—the former at twenty years, the second at seventeen—without having ever emerged from the domestic circle where the maternal glance hovered over them. Up to that time they had never been to the play; the churches

of Paris were their theatres. In short, their bringing up under their mother's roof had been as stern as it could have been in a convent. From the time they were old enough to think they slept always in a room adjoining the Comtesse de Granville's, and the door was left open all night. The time which was not devoted to the care of their persons, to religious duties or the studies indispensable to the education of well-born maidens, was passed in working with their needles for the poor, or in walks abroad like those which the English allow themselves to indulge in on Sundays, saying, "Let's not walk so fast, or we shall look as if we were enjoying ourselves." Their education did not go beyond the limits imposed by confessors who were selected from among the most intolerant and most Jansenist churchmen. Never were purer or more chaste maidens given over to a husband's keeping; their mother seemed to have looked upon this point, which is certainly most essential, as the fulfilment of her whole duty to God and man. The two poor creatures had never read a novel before marriage, nor had they drawn anything save figures whose anatomy would have seemed to Cuvier the culmination of the impossible, engraved in a way to make the Farnese Hercules himself turn woman. An old maid taught them to draw. A venerable priest instructed them in grammar, the French language, history, geography and the little arithmetic necessary for women to know. Their reading, all from books sanctioned by the church, like the *Lettres*

Edifiantes and Noël's *Leçons de Littérature*, was done aloud in the evening, always in the presence of their mother's spiritual director, for it was possible that they might fall in with passages which, without judicious comments, would arouse their imagination. Fénelon's *Télémaque* was considered a dangerous work. The Comtesse de Granville loved her daughters enough to long to make them angels after the style of Marie Alacoque; but her daughters would have preferred a less virtuous and more amiable mother.

This education bore its natural fruit. Religion imposed as a yoke and presented in its most austere form, tired out with its everlasting ceremonial these innocent young hearts, who were treated as if they were criminals; it repressed their feelings, and although it took deep root it was not loved. The two Maries were certain either to become imbeciles or to long for freedom; they would long to be married as soon as they could catch a glimpse of the world, and compare others' ideas with their own; but their own touching charms and their own priceless worth, of these they knew naught. They knew not their own purity, and what could they have known of life? Without arms against misfortune, as they were without experience to enable them to appreciate good fortune, they had no other source of consolation than themselves in the depths of their maternal prison. Their whispered confidences in the evening, or the few words they exchanged when their mother left them

for a moment, sometimes contained more ideas than the words could give expression to. Often a glance, seen by no other eye, whereby they communicated their emotions to each other, was like a poem of bitter melancholy. The sight of the cloudless sky, the sweet odor of the flowers, the circuit of the garden arm in arm, afforded them unspeakable delight. The completion of a piece of embroidery was a source of innocent joy. Their mother's social circle, far from offering their hearts any resource or stimulating their minds, had no other effect than to cast a shadow upon their thoughts and impart a tinge of sadness to their emotions: for it was composed of narrow, strait-laced, dull old women, whose conversation turned upon the points of difference between preachers and confessors, upon their petty illnesses and upon religious incidents of too trifling importance for the *Quotidienne* even, or the *Ami de la Religion.* As for the men, their faces were so cold and wore such sad and resigned expressions, that they would have extinguished the torches of love; they were all of the age when a man is disappointed and sour, when his feelings have ceased to act except at the table, and are concerned only with those things which affect his physical well-being. Religious selfishness had withered all these hearts, consecrated to duty and entrenched behind church ceremonial. Silent games at cards engrossed their attention most of the evening. The two little maids, put under the ban, as it were, by this Sanhedrim which upheld the maternal

austerity, surprised themselves by hating these depressing individuals with the sunken eyes and forbidding faces. Against the dark shadows of this life of theirs the face of one man stood out in bold relief, and that one a music-master. The confessors had decided that music was a Christian art, born in the Catholic Church and by it developed. The two little girls were permitted therefore to learn music. A spectacled maiden who taught vocal scales and the piano at a neighboring convent wore them out with exercises. But when the older of his daughters reached the age of ten, the Comte de Granville suggested the propriety of her taking a master. Madame de Granville claimed all the credit of an act of wifely obedience for this necessary concession; it is a peculiarity of devotees that they make a virtue of duties accomplished. The master was a German Catholic, one of those men, born old, who will never be more than fifty, even when they are eighty. His dark, furrowed, wrinkled face still retained a trace of childish innocence in its black depths. The deep blue of purity gave life to his eyes and the joyous smile of the springtime dwelt upon his life. His old gray hair, falling naturally like Jesus Christ's, gave to his ecstatic expression an indescribable touch of solemnity, which led people astray as to his character; he would have done the most idiotic thing with the most exemplary gravity. His habits were a necessary envelope to which he paid no attention, for his eyes were too high up among the clouds ever to descend to material

affairs. So this great, unknown artist may be said to have belonged to the amiable race of forgetful men, who give their time and their talents to others just as they leave their gloves upon every table and their umbrellas at every door. His hands were of the sort that look dirty immediately after they have been washed. In fine, his old body, which was awkwardly perched upon his old, rickety legs, and proved how far a man can make it the accessory of his mind, was one of those extraordinary creations which have never been painted save by a German, by Hoffmann, the poet of that which seems not to exist and yet has life.

Such was Schmucke, once precentor to the Margrave of Anspach, a scholar who underwent an examination at the hands of a religious council, and was asked if he fasted. The master would have liked to answer, "Just look at me!" but how could he trifle with devotees and Jansenist shepherds? The apocryphal old fellow occupied so great a place in the lives of the two Maries, and they became so attached to the pure-minded and great artist who was content to understand his art, that each of them, after her marriage, gave him an annuity of three hundred francs a year, which was enough to pay for his lodgings, his beer, his pipe and his clothing. Six hundred francs a year beside his lessons, made the earth an Eden to him. Schmucke had never had the courage to confide his poverty and his aspirations to anybody save these two adorable maidens, these hearts which had blossomed under the snow of maternal severity

and the ice of enforced piety. This fact explains Schmucke's life and the childhood of the two Maries. Later, none could say what abbé, what old devotee discovered the German astray in Paris. As soon as the mothers of families learned that the Comtesse de Granville had found a music-master for her daughters, they all asked for his name and address. Schmucke had thirty houses at which he gave lessons in the Marais. His tardy success was made manifest by shoes with bronzed steel buckles and horsehair soles, and by more frequent renewal of his linen. His artless gaiety, long repressed by noble and self-respecting poverty, reappeared. He allowed such bright little remarks as this to escape him: "Mesdemoiselles, the cats ate up the mud in Paris last night," when the frost had dried up the muddy streets over night; but he would say it in German patois, like this: "*Montemisselles, ze cads haf eaden up ze mud lazd nide een Baris!*" Well content to lay at the feet of the two angels this *forget-me-not*, so to speak, culled from among the flowers of his intellect, he would assume as he offered it, a clever, knowing air which disarmed raillery. He was so happy to make the lips of his pupils open with a smile—for the secret of their wretched lives had been fathomed by him—that he would have made himself ridiculous for that express purpose, had he not been naturally so; but his heart would have given new life to the tritest commonplaces; to adopt a happy expression of the lamented Saint-Martin he would

have made the mire golden with his heavenly smile.

In accordance with one of the most praiseworthy precepts of a religious education the two Maries always respectfully escorted their master to the door of their apartments. There the poor girls would say a few kindly words, happy in their ability to make him happy; they could show themselves as women to none but him! So it was that, up to the time of their marriage, music was to them a life within a life, just as the Russian peasant, so it is said, takes his dreams for reality, his life for a bad dream. In their desire to defend themselves against the multitude of paltry things that threatened to swallow up their lives, against the all-consuming ascetic ideas, they recklessly attacked the difficulties of the musical art. Melody, harmony, composition, the three daughters of heaven whose chorus was led by the old music-drunken Catholic faun, rewarded them for their labors and formed a rampart with their ethereal dances. Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Paësiello, Cimarosa, Hummel and the geniuses of the second order developed in them a thousand sentiments which did not overstep the chaste circle of their veiled hearts, but which made their way into the creative sphere where they flew about with wings outspread. When they had performed some little thing almost perfectly, they would press each other's hands and kiss each other ecstatically, and their old master would call them his Saint Cecilias.

The two Maries never attended a ball until they

were sixteen, and then only four times a year, at some few carefully selected houses. They did not leave their mother's side without being well provided with instructions as to the line of conduct they were to adopt toward their partners, and such strict instructions too that they could answer naught but yes or no. The countess never took her eye off her daughters, and that eye seemed to divine the words they spoke simply by the movement of their lips. The poor children had ball-dresses against which nothing could be said—muslin gowns high in the neck, with an infinitude of excessively full ruches and flounces and long sleeves. This costume, by holding in leash their charms and their hidden beauties gave them a sort of vague resemblance to an Egyptian scabbard; nevertheless two faces, lovely in their melancholy, emerged from these two masses of cotton. They were furious to find themselves the objects of kindly compassion. What woman ever lived, however innocent, who did not desire to arouse envy? No perilous or unhealthy or even equivocal thought ever stained the gray matter of their brains; their hearts were pure, their hands were horribly red, they were bursting with health. Eve came not forth from God's hands more guileless than were these maidens when they went forth from the maternal roof to the mayor's office and the church, with the simple but awe-inspiring command to render obedience in every point to the men, at whose sides they were thenceforth, sleeping or waking, to

pass their nights. In their opinion they could be no worse off in the strange households to which they were to be deported than in the maternal convent.

Why was it that the father of these girls, the Comte de Granville, great and learned and upright magistrate that he was, although sometimes carried rather far by politics, did not protect the poor little creatures from this crushing despotism? Alas! by virtue of a noteworthy bargain, agreed to after ten years of married life, the husband and wife lived separate lives in their own house. The father had stipulated that he should himself look to his sons' education, leaving to his wife the education of his daughters. In his eyes the application of this oppressive system was fraught with much less danger for girls than for boys. The two Maries, who were destined to undergo tyranny in some form, either of love or of marriage, would lose less thereby than boys, whose minds should be left free, and whose mental qualities would be impaired under the violent compression of religious ideas carried to extremes. Of four possible victims the count had saved two. The countess looked upon her two sons—one of whom was destined for a life judgeship, the other for a seat among the magistrates of uncertain tenure—as having been too badly brought up to be admitted to the slightest intimacy with their sisters. A rigorous surveillance was maintained over all communication between the poor children. Moreover, when the count took his sons from college, he was very careful not to keep them at home. The

two boys came there to breakfast with their mother and sisters; after that the magistrate provided entertainment for them away from the house; the café, the theatre, the museum, or excursions in the country in the season, supplied their diversions. Except upon solemn days in the family calendar, such as the countess's birthday or the count's New Year's day, or the days on which prizes were distributed, when the boys remained at the house and slept there—excessively bored, by the way, and afraid to kiss their sisters, they were so closely watched by their mother, who never left them together an instant—the poor girls saw their brothers so rarely that it was impossible that there should be any bond between them. On those days such questions as: "Where's Angélique?" "What's Eugénie doing?" "Where are my children?" were heard at every turn. When her two sons were mentioned the countess would raise her cold tear-bedewed eyes to Heaven as if to implore God's forgiveness for not having wrested them from the grasp of impiety. Her exclamations, her reticence in regard to them were as full of meaning as the most mournful verses of Jeremiah, and deceived the sisters, who believed their brothers to be utterly perverse and damned forever.

When his sons were eighteen years old the count gave them each a room in his own suite, and started them on the study of the law, placing them in the charge of an advocate, his secretary, who was instructed to initiate them in the secrets of their

future. Thus the two Maries knew nothing of fraternity save in the abstract. At the time of their respective marriages their brothers were both kept away by important cases, the one being then *avocat-général* in some distant jurisdiction and the other just beginning practice in the provinces. Many families whose home life one might imagine to be friendly, affectionate, coherent, really live like this: the brothers are away from home, intent upon advancement and money-making, or enlisted in the service of their country; the sisters are enveloped in a whirl of family interests, entirely distinct from theirs. And so all the members of the family are disunited and soon forget one another, and are bound together only by the feeble ties of memory until the time comes when pride or self-interest brings them together, or, it may be, severs them in spirit as they have heretofore been separated in body. A family united in body and spirit alike is a rare exception. Modern laws, multiplying the family by the family, have created the most horrible of all plagues—individualism.

In the profound solitude in which their youth was passed, Angélique and Eugénie rarely saw their father; and when he did appear in the spacious suite occupied by his wife on the ground-floor of the house, he brought a depressing countenance thither. In his home he retained the grave and solemn expression of the magistrate on the bench. When the little girls had passed the age of dolls and playthings, when they were beginning to use their

reason and had already ceased to laugh at old Schmucke—that is to say, when they were about twelve years old—they discovered the secret of the anxiety which caused the furrows on the count's brow, and detected beneath his mask of sternness the traces of a kindly disposition and a charming character. They came to understand that he had given way to the inroads of religion in his household because he was disappointed in his hopes as a husband, just as he had been wounded in the most sensitive fibres of the paternal heart, a father's love for his daughters. Such sorrow produces a singularly deep impression upon young girls who are deprived of the joys of tenderness. Sometimes as they were walking about the garden together at their childish gait, each with an arm around the other's slender waist, their father would stop them under a clump of trees and kiss their foreheads one after the other. His eyes, his mouth, his whole countenance expressed at such moments the most profound compassion.

"You aren't very happy, my dear little girls," he would say; "but I'll find husbands for you in good season, and I shall be very glad to see you leave the house."

"Papa," Eugénie would say, "we have made up our minds to marry the first man that comes along."

"And this is the bitter fruit of such a system as hers!" he would cry. "She tries to make saints, and turns out—"

He never finished the sentence. Often the girls

were conscious of most affectionate warmth in their father's manner of bidding them adieu, and in his glances when it so happened that he dined at home. They pitied this father of theirs whom they saw so rarely, and we love those whom we pity.

The austere religious education we have described was the moving cause of the marriages of the two sisters, who were welded together by unhappiness as closely as Rita-Christina by nature. Many men, forced by circumstances to think of marriage, prefer a girl taken from the convent and saturated with religion to one reared upon worldly principles. There is no middle course. A man must marry an up-to-date damsel who has read and digested the newspapers, who has waltzed and danced the galop with innumerable young men, who has been to all the plays, who has devoured all the latest novels, who has had her knees bruised by a dancing-master leaning his against them, who cares but little for religion and has prepared her own code of morals; or else a pure and untutored maiden like Marie-Angélique and Marie-Eugénie. Perhaps there is as much risk with one as with the other. However, the vast majority of men who are not as old as Arnolphe much prefer a pious Agnes to a Celimenes in embryo.

The two Maries were both short and slender; they had the same figure, the same foot, the same hand. Eugénie, the younger, was fair like her mother. Angélique was dark like her father, and yet both had the same complexion; their skin was

of that mother-of-pearl whiteness which proclaims the richness and purity of the blood, with veins of color standing clearly out upon flesh as firm of tissue as the jasmine, and like it finely marked and smooth and soft to the touch. Eugénie's blue eyes and Angélique's brown eyes had the same expression of guileless temerity, of unaffected wonder, mainly due to the vague way in which the pupil floated on the white fluid of the eye. They were well-shaped; their shoulders were a trifle thin, but would fill out in due time. Their throats, so long veiled, dazzled the eye by their perfect loveliness when their husbands besought them to don low-necked dresses for their first ball; the two ignorant creatures thereupon experienced the fascinating sense of shame which kept them blushing for a whole evening behind closed doors. At the time when this scene opens, when the older sister was weeping and seeking consolation from her junior, their hands and arms had become as white as milk. Each of them had nursed a child, one a boy, the other a girl. Eugénie had seemed to her mother to be very sly, and she had redoubled her watchfulness and harshness in her regard. In that dreaded mother's eyes, the proud and stately Angélique seemed to possess a lofty mind which would be its own safeguard, while the roguish Eugénie required to be held in check. There are in the world lovely creatures, misunderstood by destiny, who ought to succeed in everything they undertake, but who live and die unhappy, tormented by an evil genius, victims of

unforeseen circumstances. Thus the innocent, light-hearted Eugénie had fallen under the malicious despotism of a parvenu upon emerging from the maternal prison. Angélique, who was inclined to lofty conflicts of sentiment, had been tossed into the most exalted spheres of Parisian society with a halter about her neck.

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Madame de Vandenesse, who was evidently giving way under the burden of a grief that was too heavy for her heart to bear, innocent as it still was after six years of married life, was partly reclining, her legs half drawn up, her body bent double and her head wandering from side to side, as if it had lost its way, upon the back of the sofa. She had hastened to her sister's house after a brief appearance at the Italiens, and still had a few flowers in her hair, but others were scattered about on the floor with her gloves, her fur-lined silk pelisse, her muff and her hood. Tears glistened among the pearls on her white breast, and her moist eyes betokened extraordinary disclosures. Amid such luxurious surroundings, was it not horrible? The countess could not summon courage to speak.

"Poor darling," said Madame du Tillet, "what a false idea you must have of my marriage to have thought of coming to me for help!"

As she listened to these words torn from the lowest depths of her sister's heart by the fury of the storm she had poured into it, just as the snow-avalanche uproots the stones that are most firmly fixed in the torrent's bed, the countess gazed stupidly at the banker's wife, the fire of terror dried her tears and her eyes no longer wandered.

"Do you mean that you are in purgatory, too, my angel?" she said in a low voice.

"My woes will not allay your suffering."

"Tell me them, dear child. I am not selfish enough yet to refuse to listen to you! So we are still suffering together as in our youth?"

"But we are suffering apart," replied the banker's wife in a melancholy tone. "We live in two hostile societies. I go to the Tuileries while you have ceased to go there. Our husbands belong to two opposite parties. I am the wife of an ambitious banker, a bad man, my precious treasure; you are the wife of a kind, noble, generous creature—"

"Oh! don't reproach me," said the countess. "To do that a woman must have undergone the deathly weariness of a dull, colorless life, and have left it to enter the paradise of love; she must have known the bliss one feels to realize that one's whole life is another's, to marry the infinite emotions of a poetic soul, to live a twofold life; to go and come with him in his journeys through space, in the world of ambition; to suffer in his grief, to rise upon the wings of his unbounded joys, to display one's talents on a vast stage, and to remain all the while calm and cold and serene before a curious world. Yes, my dear, one must often hold a whole ocean in her heart, when sitting, as we are now, on a sofa before the fire. And yet what bliss to have always, at every minute, an enormous interest at stake, that multiplies the fibres of the heart and stretches them; to be indifferent to nothing; to find

one's life depending on a drive where you will see a gleaming eye that makes the sun turn pale; to be excited by the least delay; to long to kill an annoying creature who robs you of one of the rare moments when happiness beats madly in the tiniest veins! What ecstasy to live! Ah! my dear love, to live when so many women are on their knees praying for the emotions that elude them! Remember, my child, that for such poems there is but one time, youth. In a few years the winter comes and the cold. Ah! if you possessed these living riches of the heart and were threatened with the loss of them—"

Madame du Tillet had covered her face with her hands in dismay as she listened to this awful dirge.

"I had no idea of reproving you in the slightest degree, my dearest," she said at last, seeing the hot tears streaming down her sister's cheeks. "You have thrown more firebrands into my heart in a moment, than my tears have extinguished. Yes, the life I lead would justify my heart in such a love as that you just described. Let me say, as I think, that we should not be where we now are if we had seen more of each other. If you had known of my suffering you would have appreciated your own good fortune; perhaps you would have emboldened me to resist, and I should be happy. Your unhappiness is an accident which a lucky chance will repair, while my unhappiness is constant and everlasting. In my husband's eyes I am the portmanteau of his splendor, the signboard of his ambition, one of the

gratifications of his vanity. He has neither true affection for me nor confidence in me. Ferdinand is as cold and smooth as this marble," she said, laying her hand upon the mantel. "He distrusts me. Whatever I might ask for myself is refused in advance; but, as to anything that flatters him and advertises his fortune, I don't even have to express a wish; he decorates my apartments, he spends enormous sums on my table. My servants, my boxes at the theatre, everything that makes a show externally is in the height of the fashion. His vanity spares no expense; he will trim his children's swaddling-clothes with lace, but he won't hear their cries or divine their needs. Do you understand me? I am covered with diamonds when I go to court; in society I wear the richest gewgaws; but I haven't a sou at my disposal. Madame du Tillet, who arouses jealousy, perhaps, and who seems to be swimming in gold, hasn't a hundred francs of her own. If the father doesn't trouble himself about his children, he troubles himself even less about the mother. Ah! he's taken a rough way of making me feel that he paid for me, and that my personal fortune, over which I have no control, was extorted from him. If I had nothing to do but master him, perhaps I might fascinate him; but I am subject to the influence of a third person, a woman of fifty years and more, who has claims upon him and rules him,—she's a notary's widow. I have a feeling that I shall not be free until she is dead. My life here is as regular as a queen's; I am

summoned to breakfast and dinner as at your château. I invariably go out at a certain hour to drive in the Bois. I am always accompanied by two servants in full livery, and must always return at a fixed hour. Instead of giving orders I receive them. At the ball, at the theatre, a footman comes and tells me: 'Madame's carriage is at the door,' and I have no choice but to go, often in the midst of my enjoyment. Ferdinand would be angry if I did not conform to the etiquette he has ordained for his wife, and he frightens me. Surrounded as I am by this accursed opulence, I regret the past and think of our mother as a kind mother; she left us at night and I could talk with you then; in short I was living with a being who loved me and suffered with me; while here, in this sumptuous mansion, I am in the midst of a desert."

At this terrible confession the countess seized her sister's hand and kissed it, weeping.

"How can I help you?" Eugénie whispered. "If he should find us together, his suspicions would be aroused and he'd want to know what you've been saying to me for this last hour; then we must lie to him, and that's a hard thing to do with so shrewd and treacherous a man; he'd set traps for me to fall into. Let us leave my woes and think of yourself. Your forty thousand francs, my dear, would be nothing to Ferdinand, who turns millions over and over with another vulgar banker, the Baron de Nucingen. Sometimes I am present at dinner when they say things to make one shudder. Du Tillet

knows how discreet I am and they talk in my presence without restraint; they are sure of my silence. Do you know murder on the highroad seems to me an act of charity compared to certain financial schemes! Nucingen and he think as little of ruining people as I think of their extravagance. Often I receive poor dupes whose cases I have heard discussed the night before, and who are plunging into enterprises where they are sure to leave their fortunes: I long to say to them, as to Léonarde in the robbers' cave: 'Beware!' But what would become of me? I hold my tongue. This magnificent house is the resort of cutthroats. And Du Tillet and Nucingen throw away thousand-franc notes by the handful to gratify their whims. Ferdinand buys the site of the old château at Le Tillet, intending to rebuild it and to add to it a forest and other magnificent properties. He declares that his son shall be a count, and that his descendants in the third generation shall be noble. Nucingen is tired of his fine house on Rue Saint-Lazare and is building a palace. His wife is one of my friends. Ah!" she cried, "she may be of use to us; she is bold with her husband and has the control of her own fortune; she will save you."

"My dear puss, I have only a few hours; let's go there to-night, this instant," said Madame de Vandenesse, throwing herself into Madame du Tillet's arms, and bursting into tears.

"What! can I go out at eleven at night?"

"I have my carriage."

"What are you plotting here?" said Du Tillet, pushing open the boudoir door.

He presented to the sisters a villainous countenance, lighted up by a deceitfully affable smile. The carpet had deadened the sound of his footsteps, and the pre-occupation of the two women had prevented their hearing the noise made by Du Tillet's carriage entering the courtyard. The countess, in whom contact with the world and the perfect freedom of action accorded her by Félix had developed the two qualities, wit and shrewdness, whose growth was still retarded in her sister's case by the marital despotism which succeeded to that exercised by their mother, noticed that Eugénie's alarm was on the point of betraying itself, and saved her by a ready response.

"I thought my sister was richer than she is," said the countess, meeting her brother-in-law's gaze. "Women sometimes get into a little trouble which they don't care to mention to their husbands, like Joséphine and Napoléon, and I came to ask her to do me a favor."

"She can easily do it, my dear sister. Eugénie is very rich," replied Du Tillet with veiled malice.

"She is rich only in your eyes, my brother," retorted the countess, smiling bitterly.

"What do you want?" said Du Tillet, not sorry to get a hold upon his sister-in-law.

"You silly fellow, didn't I tell you that we don't want to compromise ourselves with our husbands?"

replied Madame de Vandenesse significantly, realizing that she was putting herself at the mercy of the man whose portrait had just been so faithfully drawn by her sister. "I will come and see Eugénie to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" rejoined the banker coldly. "No. Madame du Tillet dines to-morrow with a future peer of France, Baron de Nucingen, who will leave me his seat in the Chamber of Deputies."

"Won't you allow her to accept my box at the Opera?" said the countess without even exchanging a look with her sister, so terrified was she that she would betray their secret.

"She has her own, sister," said Du Tillet with an offended air.

"Well, I will see her there," retorted the countess.

"It will be the first time you have done us that honor," said Du Tillet.

The countess felt the reproof and began to laugh.

"Never fear, we won't make you pay anything this time," said she. "Farewell, my love."

"Impertinent hussy!" cried Du Tillet, picking up the flowers that had fallen from the countess's headdress. "You ought to study Madame de Vandenesse," he said to his wife. "I would like to see you as impertinent in society as your sister was here just now. You have an idiotic, bourgeois air that drives me mad."

Eugénie's only reply was to raise her eyes to heaven.

"Well, madame, what have you two been up to

here?" said the banker after a pause, pointing to the flowers. "What's going on that your sister should come to your box to-morrow?"

The poor serf took refuge in feigned sleepiness and left the room to undress, dreading a cross-examination. Du Tillet thereupon took her by the arm, led her back and placed her in front of him in the light of the candles burning in silver-gilt arms between two lovely bouquets of flowers, and fixed his keen eyes upon hers.

"Your sister came here to borrow forty thousand francs, owed by a man in whom she takes an interest, and who will be boxed up like something of value on Rue de Clichy inside of three days," said he coldly.

The poor woman was seized with a fit of nervous trembling which she repressed.

"You frightened me," said she. "But my sister has been too well brought up, she loves her husband too dearly to be so deeply interested in a man as that."

"You're very much mistaken," he replied drily. "Girls brought up as you two were in restraint and religious observances, are thirsty for liberty and long for happiness, and the happiness they attain is never so great nor so enjoyable as that they dreamed of. Such girls make bad wives."

"Speak for me," said poor Eugénie in a tone of bitter mockery, "but respect my sister. The Comtesse de Vandenesse is too happy, her husband leaves her too free for her not to be attached to him.

Besides, if your supposition were true, she wouldn't have told me anything about it."

"It is true," said Du Tillet. "I forbid your doing anything whatsoever in this business. It is for my interest that the man should go to prison. Consider it settled."

Madame Du Tillet left the room.

"She will disobey me of course, and I shall know all they do by having them watched," said Du Tillet when he was left alone in the boudoir. "The poor fools really think they have a chance with us!"

He shrugged his shoulders and followed his wife, or, to speak more accurately, his slave.

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Madame de Vandenesse's confidences to Madame du Tillet bore upon so many points of her life during the last six years, that they would be unintelligible without a succinct narrative of the principal events in her history.

Among the notable men who owed their fortunes to the Restoration, and whom, unluckily for itself, it neglected, as in the case of Martignac, to admit to the secrets of government, was Félix de Vandenesse, who was banished, as were several others, to the Chamber of Peers in the last days of Charles X. This disgrace, although but momentary in his eyes, led him to think upon marriage, toward which he was impelled, as many men are, by a sort of distaste for love affairs, the wild flowers of youth. It is a supreme moment when social life appears in all its gravity. Félix de Vandenesse had been alternately lucky and unlucky, more frequently unlucky than lucky, as all men are who, at their first appearance in society, have encountered love in its most attractive form. Such privileged characters become hard to please. After having made a thorough test of life and compared the characters of many individuals, they reach a point where they are content with an *almost* and take refuge in absolute self-indulgence. They are not deceived because they no longer seek to undeceive themselves; but they

resign themselves gracefully; by dint of being prepared for anything, they suffer less. Félix, however, might still be considered one of the most winning and agreeable men in Paris. He had been particularly commended to the favor of the sex by one of the noblest creatures of the age, who died, it is said, of disappointment and of love for him; but his training had been the especial care of the beautiful Lady Dudley. In the opinion of many Parisian women, Félix, a sort of hero of romance, owed many of his conquests to all the hard things that were said of him. Madame de Manerville had brought his adventurous career to a close. Without being a Don Juan, he took his leave of the lover's world as thoroughly disenchanted as he was with the world of politics. He despaired of ever falling in with his ideal of woman and of passion, which, to his undoing, had brightened and dominated his youth.

As he approached his thirtieth year Comte Félix determined to put an end to the ennui of his conquests by marrying. Upon one point his resolution was unalterable: he would take unto himself a young girl reared in the strictest tenets of catholicism. He needed no other inducement than a knowledge of the Comtesse de Granville's management of her daughters to seek the hand of the older. He also had been subjected to a mother's despotism; he remembered enough of his long-suffering boyhood to discover, despite the dissimulation of feminine modesty, to what condition the maternal

yoke had brought a young girl's heart; whether the heart was disappointed, soured, rebellious, or had remained tranquil and lovable and ready to give free access to the finer feelings. Tyranny produces two contrary effects, whose types are found in two great figures of ancient serfdom: Epictetus and Spartacus—hatred and its accompaniment of evil sentiments, resignation and its accompaniment of Christ-like meekness and affection. The Comte de Vandenesse recognized his own image in Marie-Angélique de Granville.

When he took to wife an artless, pure, innocent girl, he resolved beforehand, like the young old man that he was, to combine the affection of a father with the affection of a husband. He felt that his own heart was withered by his experience in society and in politics, and he knew that he was giving the remains of a worn-out life in exchange for a blooming, youthful life. He was placing the snows of winter beside the flowers of spring, the experience of a graybeard beside sprightly, unreflecting imprudence. Having made this judicious survey of his position, he encamped in his conjugal quarters with abundant supplies. Indulgence and confidence were the two anchors upon which he relied. Mothers of families should seek such husbands for their daughters; intelligence is as trustworthy a protector as the Deity, disenchantment as perspicacious as a surgeon, experience as wary as a mother. These three qualities are the divine virtues of marriage. The delicacies and refinements

which his habits as a lady's man and a man of fashion had taught Félix de Vandenesse, the teachings of high political office, the observations he had made during his whole life as a man devoted to business, a thinker and a man of letters one after the other, all his powers, in short, were exerted to make his wife happy, and he devoted his whole mind to the task.

Upon emerging from the maternal purgatory, Marie-Angélique was suddenly borne aloft to the conjugal paradise Félix had constructed for her on Rue du Rocher, in a house where the smallest things had an aristocratic savor, but where the varnish of good society imposed no restraint upon the harmonious good-fellowship for which loving young hearts yearn. In the first place Marie-Angélique enjoyed in their entirety the delights of material life, for her husband during two whole years acted as her intendant. He explained to her gradually and with much skill the meaning of life, initiated her by degrees into the mysteries of good society, taught her the genealogies of all the noble families, described the world to her, instructed her in the art of making her toilette and of conversation, took her from theatre to theatre, and put her through a course of literature and history. He educated her thus with the care of a lover, a father, a teacher and a husband; but with judicious gravity, he so managed her lessons and her recreations as not to destroy her religious sentiments. In short, he acquitted himself of his undertaking like a past

master. After four years he had the satisfaction of having made the Comtesse de Vandenesse one of the most agreeable and most noteworthy women of her day. Marie-Angélique's feeling for Félix was precisely that which he desired to inspire: genuine friendship, heartfelt gratitude and a fraternal love combined with such noble and dignified attachment as should exist between husband and wife. She was a mother and a good mother. Thus Félix bound his wife to himself by every possible tie without seeming to take her by the throat, and he relied for unclouded happiness upon the attractions of habit.

Only those men who have been trained in the harsh school of life and have run through the whole gamut of political and amorous disillusionment, possess the science and can conduct themselves as he did. Moreover, he felt the same delight in his work that painters and writers and architects who rear noble structures feel in the creations of their talents; he experienced a twofold enjoyment in carrying on the work and in witnessing its success, in gazing with admiration on his wife, well-informed and artless, clever and natural, lovable and chaste, young girl and mother, perfectly free and yet in chains. The history of happy households is like that of happy peoples; it can be written in two lines and has no literary interest. And so, as happiness can be explained only by itself, the story of these four years contains nothing which is not as soft as the purple hue of undying

love, as insipid as manna, and as amusing as the romance of *Astrée*.

In 1833 the edifice of happiness reared by Félix was tottering to its fall, undermined at its foundation, without the slightest suspicion on his part. The heart of the woman of twenty-five is no more identical with the heart of the girl of eighteen than that of the woman of forty is identical with that of the woman of thirty. There are four ages in a woman's life. Each age creates a new woman. Vandenesse was doubtless acquainted with the laws governing these transformations due to our modern code of morals; but he forgot them in his own case, as the most accomplished grammarian may forget the rules of grammar when he writes a book, as the greatest general on the battlefield, under fire, perplexed by the nature of the ground, may forget an invariable rule of the art of war. The man who can give enduring form to his thought by deeds is a man of genius; but the man who has the most genius does not display it at every instant—he would resemble God too closely. After four years of this life without a single heartache, without a word that produced the slightest semblance of discord in this smooth-flowing harmony of sentiment, feeling that she had attained her full development, like a lovely plant in rich soil, beneath the caresses of a glorious sun shining in a sky whose azure is never marred by a cloud, the countess experienced a sort of reaction. This crisis in her life, the subject of this scene, would be incomprehensible without

certain elucidations which will perhaps condone, in the eyes of women, the errors of this young countess, no less happy as wife than as mother, although she will appear, at first glance, to have had no excuse therefor.

Life is the result of the play of two contrary principles; when one is lacking the individual suffers. Vandenesse, by anticipating every want, had suppressed desire, the king of creation, which furnishes occupation for a vast amount of moral force. Extreme heat, extreme misery, perfect happiness, all abstract principles set up their thrones in desert places; they prefer to be alone, they stifle everything that is not themselves. Vandenesse was not a woman, and women alone know the art of imparting variety to felicity; hence their coquetry, their refusals, their fears, their quarrels, and the knowing, entertaining tricks by which they raise difficulties one day about something that offered no obstacle the day before. Men may bore one with their constancy, women never.

Vandenesse's nature was too entirely kind to permit him wilfully to annoy a wife whom he loved, and he transported her into the bluest, most cloudless infinitude of love. The problem of everlasting beatitude is one of those whose solution is known only to God, in the other world. Here on earth the sublimest poets are forever tiring out their readers by undertaking a description of paradise. The reef upon which Dante came to grief was the same that wrecked Vandenesse; honor to courage in

adversity! His wife came at last to be conscious of some monotony in an Eden so perfectly arranged; the unclouded happiness experienced by the first woman in the terrestrial paradise, causes the same feeling of nausea that the constant use of sweet things always causes at last, and made the countess long, as Rivarol did upon reading Florian, to fall in with a wolf in the sheepfold. This has always seemed to be the meaning of the emblematic serpent to which Eve applied, probably from ennui. This reflection will seem rather bold, perhaps, to Protestants, who take Genesis more seriously than the Jews themselves. But the position of Madame de Vandenesse can be explained without biblical metaphors; she felt that there was a vast amount of unemployed force in her heart, her happiness caused her no suffering, it pursued the even tenor of its way without care or anxiety, she did not tremble from the fear of losing it, it appeared every morning with the same clear sky, the same smile, the same pleasant words. The smooth surface of the lake was ruffled by no breath, not even by the zephyr; she would have liked to see an undulation in the mirror-like expanse. There was an indefinable childishness in her longing which might well have served as her excuse; but society is no more indulgent than the God of Genesis. Having learned to use her wits the countess realized perfectly how disgusting such a feeling must be, and she could not bear the thought of confiding it to her *dear little husband.* In her simplicity she had invented no

other pet name than this, for one cannot forge in cold natures the deliciously exaggerated language that love teaches its victims amid the flames.

Vandenesse, delighted with his wife's adorable reserve, detained her in the temperate latitudes of conjugal affection by his shrewd devices. Indeed, that model husband deemed unworthy of a noble heart the meretricious expedients which would have made him greater in her eyes and would have won for him a reward from her heart; he preferred to depend upon his own powers of pleasing and to owe nothing to the artifices of fortune. The Comtesse Marie smiled when she saw an incomplete or poorly set up equipage in the Bois; her eyes would complacently return to the clock-like movement of her own horses in their English harness which left them almost free, and each keeping his proper position. Félix never lowered himself so far as to gather up the profits of the trouble he took; in his wife's eyes his love of luxury and his good taste were quite natural; she was not grateful to him for the fact that her self-esteem was not wounded. It was so with everything. Kindness is not without its disadvantages; people attribute it to one's character, and are seldom willing to see in it the secret efforts of a noble heart, while they reward evil-minded men for the harm they do not do.

About this time Madame Félix de Vandenesse reached the point where her education was so far advanced that she could lay aside the rôle of timid, observing, listening supernumerary which Giulia

Grisi played for some time, they say, in the chorus at La Scala. The young countess felt that she was competent to essay the part of prima donna, and she made several ventures in that direction. To Félix's satisfaction she joined in conversation. Ingenious repartees and shrewd observations, sown in her mind by her intercourse with her husband, drew attention to her, and success made her bold. Vandenesse, whose wife was universally admitted to be beautiful, was delighted when she acquired a reputation for wit. On returning from a ball or a concert or a rout at which Marie had shone, she would say to Félix with a pleased and saucy expression, as she was undressing: "Were you satisfied with me tonight?"

The countess aroused some jealousy—among others on the part of her husband's sister, the Marquise de Listomère, who had patronized her at first with the idea that she was taking under her wing one who would make an excellent background against which to display her own attractions. A countess named Marie, lovely, intellectual and virtuous, a musician and not a flirt—what a victim for society! There were several women in society with whom Félix de Vandenesse had broken, or who had broken with him, but who were not indifferent to his marriage. When these women found Madame de Vandenesse to be a little bit of a creature with red hands, extremely diffident, with little to say for herself, and apparently little given to thinking, they thought they were sufficiently

avenged. The disasters of July, 1830, supervened, society was dissolved for two years, people of wealth remained at their estates in the country or traveled in Europe while the agony lasted, and the salons did not reopen much before 1833. Faubourg Saint-Germain had the sulks, but it looked upon some houses, among others the Austrian ambassador's, as neutral ground; legitimist society and the new society met there in the persons of their most fashionable leaders.

Attached by a thousand ties of affection and gratitude to the exiled family, but strong in his matured convictions, Vandenesse did not feel called upon to imitate the absurdly extravagant performances of his party. While the danger lasted he did his duty at the risk of his life by making his way through the waves of the populace to propose terms of accommodation; so he took his wife into society where his fidelity could never be brought in question. Vandenesse's former lady friends found it difficult to recognize the young bride in the fashionable, bright, sweet-spoken countess, who reappeared with the most exquisite manners of the female aristocracy. Mesdames d'Espard and De Manerville, Lady Dudley and some others less known were conscious of the awakening of serpents in the recesses of their hearts; they heard the soft hissing of angered pride, they were jealous of Félix's happiness; they would willingly have given their prettiest slippers to have some harm befall him. Instead of showing hostility to the countess these

kind unkind women thronged about her, were excessively friendly to her, and praised her to the skies to the men. Having no doubt of their real intentions, Félix kept close watch upon their relations with Marie and told her not to trust them. One and all divined the discomfort their intercourse caused the count, they did not forgive his distrust of them, and they redoubled their attentions and devotion to their rival, who achieved a striking success through their efforts, to the great disgust of the Marquise de Listomère, who did not understand it at all. The Comtesse Félix de Vandenesse was said to be the most fascinating and cleverest woman in Paris. Marie's other sister-in-law, Marquise Charles de Vandenesse, was annoyed again and again by the confusion caused by the identity of names and the comparisons to which it gave rise. Although the marchioness was also a very beautiful and accomplished woman, her sister-in-law's rivals found it easy to make trouble between them because the countess was twelve years younger. These women knew how certain the countess's success was to cause unpleasantness in her relations with her sisters-in-law, who became extremely cold and uncivil to the triumphant Marie-Angélique.

These were dangerous allies, intimate enemies. Everyone knows that literature was at that time defending itself against the general indifference born of the political drama, by producing works more or less Byronic which treated of little else than

conjugal shortcomings. In those days infractions of the marriage vow were the main support of reviews, books and the stage. This everlasting subject was never more fashionable. The lover, nightmare of husbands, was everywhere, except perhaps in real life, where he was less in evidence in those days of bourgeois supremacy than ever before. Do thieves select for their walks abroad the time when everybody is running to his window, shouting: "Watch!" and lighting up the street? If, during these years which were so fruitful in municipal, political and moral agitation, matrimonial catastrophes did happen, they were exceptions and did not attract so much attention as under the Restoration. Nevertheless women talked much among themselves of the subject that then engrossed the two forms of poesy: the book and the stage. There was frequent discussion of the lover, that rare and much desiderated creature. Such adventures as were noised abroad furnished food for gossip, and the burden of the gossip was, as always, sustained by the women of irreproachable character. A fact worthy of remark is the repugnance manifested by women who indulge in illicit enjoyment for discussions of this sort; they preserve a modest, reserved, almost timid demeanor in society; they have the air of requesting everyone to be silent, or to forgive them for their stolen pleasure. When, on the other hand, a woman takes delight in hearing of family catastrophes, when she listens to explanations of the joys which justify the culprits, be sure that she

is at the cross-roads of indecision and does not know which road to take.

During that winter the Comtesse de Vandenesse heard the loud voice of society bellowing in her ears, the tempests roared about her. Her pretended friends, who rose above their reputations by virtue of their eminent names and rank, sketched the seductive figure of the lover to her again and again, and poured into her heart burning words about love, the key to the enigma life propounds to womankind, the great passion, according to Madame de Staël, who practised what she preached. When the countess innocently asked, in private, what the difference was between a husband and a lover, some one of the women who longed to do Vandenesse an injury would always reply in such a way as to excite her curiosity, put the spur to her imagination, make an impression on her heart and interest her mind.

"You exist with your husband, my dear, but you really live only with your lover," said her sister-in-law, the Marquise de Vandenesse.

"Marriage, my child, is our purgatory," said Lady Dudley; "love is paradise."

"Don't you believe her," cried Mademoiselle des Touches, "it's perfect hell!"

"But it's a hell where one loves," observed the Marquise de Rochefide. "There's often more pleasure in suffering than in happiness; look at the martyrs!"

"With a husband, you little goose, we live our

own life, so to speak; but to love is to live in another's life," said the Marquise d'Espard.

"A lover is forbidden fruit, a fact which sums up the whole thing so far as I am concerned," said pretty Moïna de Saint-Héren, laughingly.

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When she was not in attendance upon diplomatic routs, or at a ball at the house of some wealthy foreigner, like Lady Dudley or Princess Galathionne, the countess went into society almost every evening after the Italiens or the Opera—to the Marquise d'Espard's, or Madame de Listomère's or Mademoiselle des Touches' or the Comtesse de Montcornet's or the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu's, those being the only aristocratic houses then open; and she never left one of those houses that a few more poisonous seeds had not been sown in her heart. They talked to her about *completing her life*—an expression much in vogue at that time; about *being understood*—another expression to which women give extraordinary meanings. She would return home restless, excited, curious and thoughtful. It seemed to her that a vague something had gone from her life, but she did not go so far as to find it a desert.

Among the salons frequented by Madame Félix the most entertaining, and the most mixed social circle, was to be found at the Comtesse de Montcornet's, a fascinating little woman, who received illustrious artists, kings of finance, and distinguished authors, but only after subjecting them to such severe scrutiny that those who were most exacting in the matter of their associates had no reason to fear that they should meet there anybody of inferior social standing. The most exalted pretensions were

free from danger there. During the winter, when society was rallying its forces, several salons, among which were Madame d'Espard's and Madame de Listomère's, Mademoiselle des Touches' and the Duchesse de Grandlieu's, had enlisted recruits among the latest celebrities in art, science, literature and politics. Society never loses its rights, it always seeks to be entertained. At a concert given by the countess, toward the end of the winter, one of the contemporaneous lights of literature and politics made his appearance in her salon—Raoul Nathan,—presented by one of the cleverest but also one of the laziest authors of the age, Émile Blondet, another famous man, but only among his friends; bepraised by the journalists, but unknown beyond the barriers. Blondet knew it; moreover, he indulged in no illusions, and among other disdainful remarks he was accustomed to make was this—that fame was a poison that it was well to take in small doses.

From the moment that he fought his way out into the light after a long struggle, Raoul Nathan had profited by the sudden admiration for form manifested by those dandified adulators of the Middle Ages, jocularly called *Young France*. He had affected the peculiarities of a man of genius, enrolling himself among those worshipers of art whose intentions, by the way, were excellent; for, although there could be nothing more absurd than the dress of Frenchmen in the Nineteenth Century, it required courage to reform it. We must do Raoul

the justice to say that there is in his person an indefinable something grand, grotesque and extraordinary, which requires a frame. His friends and his enemies, and they are about equal in number, agree that nothing could be more in accord with his mind than his body. Raoul Nathan would be more remarkable perhaps in a state of nature than he is with his surroundings. His seamed and wasted face gives him the appearance of having fought with angels or demons; it resembles the face that German painters give the dead Christ: it shows innumerable traces of an unremitting conflict between weak human nature and the powers above. But the deep wrinkles in his cheeks, the indentations on his contorted, furrowed skull, the deep hollows about his eyes and in his temples indicate no weakness of constitution. His hard muscles and prominent bones have a remarkably robust appearance; and although his skin, made sallow by dissipation, clings closely to them as if internal fires had dried and shrunken it, it covers none the less a formidable framework. He is tall and thin. His long hair, always disarranged, aims for effect. This unkempt, ill-made Byron has the legs of a heron, swollen knees, an exaggerated swagger, hands strong as a crab's claws, with muscles standing out like whipcord, and thin, nervous fingers. He has Napoléonic eyes,—blue eyes whose glance pierces the soul; a twisted nose, cunning beyond description; a lovely mouth, embellished with the whitest teeth a woman could ask. There are fire and animation in the

poise of his head, and genius on his brow. Raoul is one of the few men who attract your notice as they pass, and in a salon form a luminous point on which all eyes converge. He attracts attention by his *négligé*, if we may borrow from Molière the word used by *Éliante* to describe the *sloven*. His clothes always look as if they had been rumpled and twisted and pulled about for the express purpose of making them harmonize with his countenance. He usually keeps one of his hands in his open waistcoat, in the attitude made famous by Girodet's portrait of Monsieur de Chateaubriand; but he does it not so much to resemble him—for he prefers not to resemble anybody—as to disarrange the smooth folds of his shirt. His cravat is displaced in an instant by the convulsive movements of his head, which are extraordinarily quick and jerky, like those of blooded horses, fretting under their harness, who toss their heads incessantly in vain endeavors to get rid of the bit or the curb. His long, pointed beard is neither combed nor brushed nor scented nor trimmed, like those of the dandies who wear their beards fan-shaped or trimmed to a point; he leaves it as it is. His hair strays between his coat collar and his cravat, and falls luxuriantly over his shoulders, leaving a greasy mark on the spots it caresses. His thin, sinewy hands are unacquainted with the ministrations of the nail-brush and the luxury of the lemon. Several journalists will have it that holy water does not often refresh their calcined skin. In a word, the redoubtable Raoul is a grotesque creature. His

movements are jerky as if produced by imperfect mechanism. His gait runs counter to all ideas of good order, with its enthusiastic zigzags and unexpected pauses which bring him in violent contact with the pacific bourgeois walking along the boulevards.

His conversation, overflowing with caustic humor and bitter epigrams, copies the movements of his body: it suddenly abandons the revengeful tone and becomes soothing, poetic, consolatory and rambling; there are unexplicable pauses, and somersaults of wit which sometimes become wearisome. His manner in society is audaciously awkward, contemptuous of conventions, and he assumes a critical air with regard to everything that society respects, which gives him a bad name with small-minded folk as well as with those who strive to keep alive the old-time doctrines of courtesy; but there is something original about it as there is about Chinese ornaments,—something that women do not dislike. Moreover, to them he sometimes displays unwonted affability, and seems to take pleasure in making them forget his outlandish appearance in achieving a victory over their antipathy which flatters his vanity, his self-esteem or his pride.

"Why are you like this?" the Marquise de Vandenesse asked him one day.

"Aren't pearls found in shells?" he replied pompously.

To another person who put the same question to him he replied:

"If I were attractive to everybody, how could I make myself more so to one chosen individual?"

Raoul Nathan carries into his intellectual life, the disorder he has taken for his ensign. Its announcement is not misleading; his talent resembles that of the poor girls who apply for positions as maid-of-all-work in bourgeois households. He was, first of all, a critic, and a great critic; but he detected fraud in that trade. His articles were worth as much as books, he said. The profits of the stage next fascinated him; but, being incapable of the slow, constant work demanded of a stage-manager, he was compelled to become associated with a vaudevillist, Du Bruel, who put his ideas in shape, and always succeeded in reducing them to productive little plays, running over with wit, and invariably written for some particular actor or actress. Between them they discovered Florine, an actress who made a great hit. Humiliated by a partnership resembling that of the Siamese twins, Nathan produced, unaided, at the Théâtre-Français, a great drama which fell with all the honors of war, amid the salvos of crushing newspaper articles. In his younger days he had made an attempt to enrich the great and noble French stage with a magnificent romantic play after the style of *Pinto*, at a time when the classical fad reigned supreme; but there was so much uproar and excitement at the Odéon for three evenings that the play was prohibited. In the eyes of many people, this second play, like the first, seemed a masterpiece, and won him more

reputation than all the more profitable pieces written in collaboration with others,—among people whose opinion had little weight, however, namely connoisseurs and men of genuine good taste.

"Another such failure," said Émile Blondet, "and you will become immortal."

But, instead of pursuing that rocky road, Raoul had from necessity fallen back upon the powder and patches of eighteenth century vaudeville, upon costume plays, and scenic reproductions of successful books. Nevertheless, he was looked upon as a great mind, who had not said his last word. Indeed he had ventured into the loftier realms of literature and had published three novels, without counting those that he kept under lock and key, like fish in an artificial pond. One of these three books—the first, as is the case with many authors who have never succeeded in writing more than one book—was brilliantly successful. This artistic work being rashly assigned the highest rank, he was accustomed to refer to it on all occasions as the finest book of the age, the only novel of the century. He complained loudly, however, of the exigences of art; he was one of those who were most instrumental in enrolling all forms of artistic production, the picture, the statue, the book, the edifice, under the single banner of Art. He began by putting forth a collection of verses which entitled him to a place in the constellation of poets of the present day, and among which there was one mystical poem that was much admired. Being compelled by his lack of means to

earn his living, he wandered from the stage to the press, from the press to the stage, dissipated and extravagant, trusting always to his lucky star. His renown therefore was not unpublished like that of a number of expiring celebrities, kept alive by the titles of forthcoming works, which will not have as many editions as they need markets. Nathan resembled a man of genius; and if he had gone to the scaffold, as he was once seized with a longing to do, he might have struck his hand against his brow after the manner of André de Chénier. He was attacked by political ambition when he witnessed the irruption into the government of a score of authors, professors, metaphysicians and historians, who grafted themselves on the machine during the troubles from 1830 to 1833, and he regretted that he had not written political rather than literary articles. He deemed himself superior to these upstarts, whose elevation aroused consuming jealousy in his heart. He was one of those men who are jealous of everybody and capable of anything, whose triumphs are always stolen from them, and who go stumbling along toward one luminous point after another without establishing themselves at any one, and forever wearing out the good will of their neighbors. At this particular time he was on his way from Saint-Simonism to republicanism, to return, perhaps, to ministerialism. He had his bone to gnaw in every corner, and was on the lookout for a safe place where he could bark at pleasure out of reach of blows and make himself an object of fear; but he

had the humiliation of seeing that he was not taken seriously by the illustrious De Marsay, who was then at the head of the government and had no consideration for authors in whom he could not detect what Richelieu called the spirit of sequence, or, better still, sequence in his ideas. Furthermore, any ministry must have taken into account the constant confusion of Raoul's affairs. Sooner or later, necessity would bring him to the point where he must submit to conditions instead of imposing them. Raoul's real but sedulously hidden character is in accord with his public performance. He is an actor in good faith, as self-satisfied as if the State were *he*, and a very clever declaimer. No one knows better than he how to feign sentiment, to pride himself upon false grandeur, to deck himself out with fine moral aphorisms, to maintain his dignity in words, and to pose as an Alceste while adopting the methods of a Philinte. His selfishness trots along, protected by this armor of painted pasteboard, and often attains the secret goal at which it aims. Slothful to the last degree, he has never done anything except when goaded by the spear-points of necessity. The unremitting toil necessarily expended upon the creation of a monument he knows nothing of; but in the paroxysm of rage brought on by a wound inflicted upon his vanity, or at a crisis precipitated by a creditor, he leaps the Eurotas and triumphs over the most difficult mental banking operations. Then, worn out and amazed to find that he has really created something, he falls back

into the slough of Parisian dissipation. His necessities become alarming; he has expended all his strength, so he descends from his high estate and compromises himself. Induced by a mistaken idea of his own grandeur and his future, which he measures by the exalted fortune of an old comrade of his, one of the few men with a genius for administration brought to light by the Revolution of July, he so far demeans himself, in order to get clear of the difficulty, as to play unconscionable tricks upon people who are attached to him—tricks that are buried in the mysteries of private life, and of which no one ever speaks or complains. The frivolity of his heart, the effrontery of the grasp of his hand, in which are gathered all the vices, unhappiness and treachery in every guise, and every shade of opinion, have made him as inviolable as a constitutional king. The venial sin, which would raise a hue and cry at the heels of a man of high character, is of no consequence in him; an indelicacy is almost nothing, and everybody makes excuses for himself by excusing him. The very man who might be tempted to despise him offers him his hand, fearing that he may need him. He has so many friends that he longs for foes. His apparent good-fellowship, which attracts newcomers and interferes with no act of treachery, which takes great liberties and justifies everything, which cries aloud at an injury and forgives it, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the journalist. This *camaraderie*, a word invented by a bright man, corrodes the noblest

hearts; it eats away their pride, destroys the active principle of great exploits, and makes of mental cowardice a sacred thing. By exacting this pliability of conscience from everybody, certain people seek to obtain absolution for their own treachery and backsliding. That is how the most enlightened portion of a nation may become the least estimable.

From a literary standpoint Nathan lacks style and thoroughness. Like the majority of young men ambitious of literary renown, he disgorges to-day what he learned yesterday. He has neither the time nor the patience to write; he has not been an observant man, but he listens well. Incapable of constructing a vigorous, well-knit plot, he saves his reputation perhaps by the fervid enthusiasm of his sketch. He *plays at passion*—to use a bit of literary slang,—because in genuine passion everything is true; while it is the mission of genius to seek among the chance developments of the true for what is likely to seem probable to everybody. Instead of awakening novel ideas, his heroes are simply exaggerated personalities, who arouse only momentary sympathy; they have no relation to the important interests of life, and for that reason they represent nothing; but he maintains his position by the rapid working of his mind, by those lucky hits which billiard-players call flukes. None so skilful as he, at shooting on the wing, the ideas that hover over Paris or that Paris beats up. His fertility is not his own, but the time's: he lives upon passing events, and, in order to control them, stretches them

too far. In short, he is not genuine; his words are false; there is, as Comte Félix said, something of the sleight-of-hand artist about him. We can feel that his pen gets its ink in an actress's closet. Nathan is a fair type of the literary youth of to-day, its fictitious grandeur and its real misery; he represents it with its faulty beauty and its crushing failures, its life of foaming torrents, sudden reverses, unhoped-for triumphs. He is the true child of this jealousy-ridden age, when innumerable rivalries under cover of projects of all sorts are nourishing for their own benefit the hydra of anarchy, born of all their errors—the age which seeks fortune without labor, glory without talent, success without strife; but which, after many rebellions and many skirmishes, its vices are forcing to trim down the budget at the pleasure of Power. When so many youthful ambitions set out on foot, and are all bound for the same point, there is a constant clashing of wills, incredible suffering, desperate strife. In this ghastly struggle, the most violent or the most wary egoism gains the victory. The example thus set is envied and extenuated, despite the hullabaloo, as Molière would say; and others follow it.

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When Raoul made his appearance in Madame de Montcornet's salon in the capacity of an enemy of the new dynasty, his apparent grandeur was in a flourishing condition. He was accepted as the political critic of the De Marsays, the Rastignacs, the La Roche-Hugons, who formed the government. Émile Blondet, Nathan's sponsor, always the victim of his fatal hesitation and of his repugnance to do anything that concerned himself alone, was still playing the rôle of scoffer, took sides with nobody and was on good terms with everybody. He was Raoul's friend, Rastignac's friend, Montcornet's friend.

"You're a political triangle," De Marsay once said to him, when he met him at the Opera; "that particular geometrical figure is suitable only for God, who hasn't anything to do; but ambitious men ought always to follow a curved line, the shortest road in politics."

Seen at a distance, Raoul Nathan was a very striking meteor. Fashion authorized his manners and his apparel. His borrowed republicanism gave him for the moment the Jansenist asperity assumed by the defenders of the popular cause,—at whom he sneered internally,—and which is not without a certain fascination in a woman's eyes. Women love to perform miracles, to crush stones, to melt

natures that seem to be of bronze. Thus Raoul's moral toilette was at this time in harmony with his bodily garb. He was fitted to be and was, for the Eve wearied of her paradise on Rue du Rocher, the glistening, many-hued serpent, he of the honeyed words, magnetic eyes and graceful motions, who destroyed the first woman. As soon as the Comtesse Marie's eyes fell upon Raoul, she was conscious of an internal commotion so violent as almost to terrify her. This pseudo-great man, by his glance alone, exerted a physical influence upon her that reached to her heart and caused a turmoil there. The turmoil affected her pleasantly. The purple cloak that fame threw for a moment over Nathan's shoulder dazzled the guileless creature.

When the time for serving tea arrived, Marie left the place where she had been sitting with several ladies who were busily talking; she was disturbing herself about this extraordinary being. Her silence was noticed by her pretended friends. She approached the square divan in the centre of the salon where Raoul was holding forth. She remained standing, leaning on the arm of Madame Octave de Camps, a dear, good woman, who never breathed a word as to the involuntary trembling that betrayed her intense excitement. Although the eye of a woman in love or taken by surprise allows glances of incredible sweetness to escape it, Raoul was discharging at that moment a veritable shower of fireworks; he was too much engrossed by his epigrams which went off like bombs, by his accusations,

darting hither and thither like spluttering suns, by the flaming portraits he was drawing in fiery strokes, to remark the artless admiration of a poor little Eve, hidden in the group of women that surrounded him. Such curiosity as theirs, the counterpart of that which would cause all Paris to rush to the Jardin des Plantes to see a unicorn if one should be found in the famous Mountains of the Moon, still untrodden by European feet,—such curiosity intoxicates second-rate minds as much as it saddens the truly lofty-minded; but it enchanted Raoul; he was therefore too devoted to all the ladies to be devoted to a single one.

"Take care, my dear," whispered Marie's kind, thoughtful companion, "you had better go."

The countess looked at her husband to ask him for his arm with one of the glances husbands do not always understand: Félix took her away.

"My dear boy," said Madame d'Espard in Raoul's ear, "you're a lucky rascal. You have made more than one conquest to-night, and among others, the charming woman who left us so abruptly."

"What do you suppose the Marquise d'Espard undertook to tell me?" Raoul asked Blondet, repeating the great lady's remark to him when they were almost alone, between one and two o'clock in the morning.

"Why, I heard that the Comtesse de Vandenesse had fallen madly in love with you. You're not to be pitied."

"I didn't see her," said Raoul.

"Oh! you'll see her, you rascal," said Blondet, roaring with laughter. "Lady Dudley made you promise to go to her great ball so that you may meet her."

Raoul and Blondet left the house with Rastignac, who offered them seats in his carriage. All three laughed heartily at the idea of an eclectic under-secretary of state in company with a ferocious republican and a political atheist.

"Suppose we take supper at the expense of the existing order of things?" suggested Blondet, who wished to restore suppers to favor.

Rastignac took them to Véry's, sent away his carriage, and they took their seats around the festive board, analyzing society as it is to-day, and laughing with Rabelaisian glee. In the course of the supper, Rastignac and Blondet advised their supposititious foe not to neglect such a capital opportunity as was offered him. The two roués gave him a satirical sketch of Marie de Vandenesse's history; with the scalpel of the epigram and the keen point of the *bon mot* they dissected her innocent childhood, her happy married life. Blondet congratulated Raoul upon having met a woman who was as yet guilty of nothing worse than wretched drawings in red chalk, paltry water-color landscapes, slippers embroidered for her husband, and sonatas executed with the purest intentions; tied for eighteen years to her mother's petticoat, preserved in religious ceremonial, dressed by Vandenesse, and cooked to a turn by marriage, to be tasted by love. At the third

bottle of champagne, Raoul Nathan became more communicative than he had ever been with anybody.

"My friends," said he, "you know my relations with Florine, you know what my life is, and you will not be surprised to hear my confession that I have absolutely no idea of the color of a countess's love. I have often felt deeply humiliated to think that I could not take to myself a Beatrice or a Laura except in poetry! A pure, noble woman is like an unsullied conscience which shows us to ourselves in attractive guise. We may sully ourselves, you know; but with such a woman we remain great and proud and immaculate. We lead wild lives; but with such a woman we find tranquillity and refreshment and the verdure of the oasis."

"Come, come, my boy," said Rastignac, "give us the prayer of *Moses* on the fourth string, à la Paganini."

Raoul sat silent, his eyes staring into vacancy.

"This low-lived minister's apprentice doesn't understand me," he said, after a pause.

Thus, while the poor Eve of Rue du Rocher lay between the swaddling-clothes of humiliation, terrified at the thought of the pleasure with which she had listened to this sham great poet, and hesitating between the stern voice of her gratitude to Vandenesse and the honeyed words of the serpent, these three shameless wits were trampling on the tender, white flowers of her nascent love. Ah! if women but knew what a cynical tone these men, who are

so patient and wheedling in their presence, adopt when they are out of sight, how they would mock at what they now adore! How they tore the blooming, fascinating, modest creature to pieces and analyzed her in their facetious way! but what a triumph for her, too! The more veils she lost, the more beauties she disclosed.

Marie at that moment was comparing Raoul to Félix, with no suspicion of the risk run by the heart in drawing such parallels. No two men in the world afforded a more striking contrast than the powerful, dishevelled Raoul and Félix de Vandenesse, curled and combed like any dandy, arrayed in clothes of faultless cut, endowed with charming ease of manner, a disciple of the English school of elegance to which Lady Dudley had long ago admitted him. Such a contrast pleases the imagination of women who are sufficiently interested to pass from one extreme to the other. The countess, a virtuous and pious woman, forbade herself to think of Raoul, accusing herself the next day, in her paradise, of being a detestably ungrateful creature.

"What do you think of Raoul Nathan?" she asked her husband at breakfast.

"A mere sleight-of-hand performer," was the count's reply; "one of those volcanoes that can be made to subside with a little gold-dust. The Comtesse de Montcornet did wrong to admit him to her house."

This reply was the more crushing to Marie in that Félix, who was thoroughly posted in literary matters,

supported his opinion by proofs, relating what he knew of Raoul Nathan's hand-to-mouth life, bound up with that of Florine, a famous actress.

"If the man has genius," he concluded, "he has neither the application nor the patience which consecrate it and make it a divine thing. He tries to impose upon society by placing himself on a level where he can't maintain himself. Men of genuine talent, studious, honorable men, don't do as he does; they go their way courageously, accept their poverty and don't cover it up with tinsel."

A woman's mind is endowed with incredible elasticity: when it receives a stunning blow, it bends, seems utterly crushed, and soon resumes its original shape.

"Félix is right, of course," the countess said to herself at first.

But three days later she was thinking of the serpent once more, led back to him by the sweet, yet painful emotion Raoul had awakened in her, and which Vandenesse had been foolish enough never to cause her to feel.

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The count and countess went to Lady Dudley's great ball, at which De Marsay made his last appearance in society, for he died two months later, leaving behind him the reputation of a most eminent statesman, whose capacity, said Blondet, was past comprehension. Vandenesse and his wife found Raoul Nathan in that assemblage, which was particularly remarkable for the presence of several characters in the political drama of the day who were much surprised to find themselves together. It was one of the first solemn functions in high society. The salons presented a magic spectacle; flowers, diamonds, gorgeous headgear, all the emptied jewel-cases, all the resources of the toilette brought under contribution. The whole might be compared to one of those artistic hothouses in which wealthy horticulturists collect the loveliest exotics. Here was the same brilliancy of color, the same delicacy of tissue. Human handicraft seemed eager for the conflict with animate works of nature. On all sides were gauzes, white or colored like the wings of the loveliest of dragon-flies, crêpes, laces, silks, tulles as many-hued as the caprices of nature in bird-life, pinked and waved and flounced, gold and silver spiders' webs, waving mists of silk, flowers embroidered by fairies or brought to perfection by imprisoned genii, feathers dyed by the fierce tropical

sun waving like weeping willows over haughty heads, strings of pearls woven into mats, and dress-stuffs smooth and rough and ribbed, as if the genius of arabesques had acted as adviser to the French manufacturers.

This magnificence was in harmony with the beautiful women assembled there as if to form a keepsake. The eye beheld the whitest of shoulders, some of the hue of amber, others so glossy that it seemed as if they must have been passed between heavy cylinders, these with the sheen of satin, those dead-white and plump as if Rubens had prepared the paste,—in fine, all the variations of white known to mankind. There were eyes that sparkled like the onyx or the turquoise, bordered with black velvet or with a fringe of long, blonde lashes; faces of many shapes which recalled the most attractive types of the different countries; foreheads sublime and majestic, or with a graceful outward curve as if thought abounded there, or flat as if resistance unsubdued were there enthroned; and then, the thing that adds so much to the attractiveness of a fête designed for show, there were breasts that overlay each other as George IV. liked them, or separated after the fashion of the eighteenth century, or with a tendency to draw near each other, as Louis XV. preferred them; but exhibited without shame and without covering, except perhaps one of the pretty little ruffled tuckers to be seen in Raphael's portraits, the triumph of his patient pupils. The prettiest of feet itching for the dance, waists abandoned

to the waltzer's arm, gave a fillip to the attention of the most indifferent. The melodious hum of sweetest voices, the rustling of dresses, the murmurs of the contradance, the rhythmic beat of the waltz furnished a fantastic accompaniment to the music. It seemed as if a fairy's wand must have called into being this scene of overpowering witchery, this melody of sweet odors, the lights that were reflected in all the colors of the rainbow in the crystal sconces where the candles twinkled, and the pictures multiplied by the mirrors.

This throng of lovely women and lovely toilettes stood out in bold relief against the black mass of the men, where the blonde moustaches and serious faces of the English were mingled with the clean-cut, refined, classic profiles of the nobles, and the gracious countenances of the French aristocracy. All the orders of Europe gleamed upon their breasts, hanging about their necks, worn saltire-wise, or falling at the hip. To one who closely scrutinized this great assemblage, it not only presented the brilliant hues of magnificent attire,—it had a soul, it lived and thought and felt. Hidden passions imparted to it features of its own: you would have seen malevolent glances exchanged, giddy, inquisitive young girls in white betraying a desire, jealous women wagging their evil tongues behind their fans or paying one another fulsome compliments. Society, bedizened, curled and perfumed, yielded to a sort of festal frenzy, that went to the brain like a powerful vapor. It was as if from every brain as from every

heart emotions and ideas found vent, and were condensed into a solid mass which reacted upon the least imaginative persons and excited them.

At the moment when the animation of this soul-stirring festivity was at its height, in a corner of the gilded salon where one or two bankers, ambassadors, former ministers, and wicked old Lord Dudley, whose presence was accidental, were playing cards, Madame Félix de Vandenesse was irresistibly impelled to enter into conversation with Nathan. It may be that she fell a victim to the ball-room intoxication which has often extorted confessions from the most discreet women.

At the sight of this festive throng and the splendors of a world to which he had never before been admitted, Nathan's ambition redoubled and gnawed at his heart. When he looked upon Rastignac, whose younger brother had just been appointed bishop at twenty-seven years of age, whose brother-in-law, Martial de la Roche-Hugon, was in the ministry, and who was himself an under-secretary of state and was to marry, so rumor had it, the Baron de Nucingen's only daughter; when he saw in the diplomatic corps, an unknown scribbler who translated foreign newspapers for a journal that had come over to the new dynasty in 1830; when he saw editorial writers admitted to the Council of State, professors made peers of France, he sadly concluded that he was on the wrong tack preaching the overthrow of this aristocracy where fortunate talents shone, and discretion crowned by success, and

genuine superiority. Blondet, who was so unfortunate, so thoroughly worked out in journalism, but so well received at that house—he could still, if he chose, make a fresh start on the road to fortune as a result of his liaison with Madame de Montcornet—was in Nathan's eyes a striking example of the power of social connections. Deep down in his heart he determined to snap his fingers at opinions after the fashion of the De Marsays, Rastignacs and Blondets, and of Talleyrand, the leader of the sect; to accept nothing but facts; to twist them to serve his own purposes, to see in every scheme a weapon, and not to disturb so well-constituted, attractive and natural a society.

"My future," he said to himself, "depends upon a woman who belongs to this circle."

Acting upon this thought, conceived in the flames of a frenzied desire, he fell upon the Comtesse de Vandenesse like a vulture upon its prey. The charming creature, so pretty in her headdress of marabou feathers which produced the deliciously soft effect of Lawrence's paintings, quite in harmony with her sweet disposition, was carried away by the ambition-mad poet's seething energy. Lady Dudley, whom nothing escaped, shielded this episode by handing the Comte de Vandenesse over to Madame de Manerville. This lady, strong in her former ascendancy, steered Félix out upon the broad waters of a quarrel accompanied with much enticement, with whispered confidences embellished by blushes, with regrets shrewdly tossed at his feet

like flowers, and with recriminations whereby she put herself in the right for the sake of being put in the wrong. These two disunited lovers spoke for the first time from ear to ear.

While her husband's former mistress was digging among the ashes of extinct pleasures, trying to find a few live coals there, Madame Félix de Vandenesse was experiencing the violent palpitations of the heart caused by a woman's certainty that she is doing wrong and is treading on forbidden ground: emotions which are not without charm and which awaken many slumbering powers. To-day, as in the tale of Bluebeard, all women love to use the blood-stained key; a magnificent mythological idea, one of the glories of Perrault.

The sorry dramatist, who knew his Shakespeare thoroughly, unfolded his wretchedness, described his struggle with men and things, hinted at his baseless greatness, his unsuspected genius for politics, his life which contained no lofty sentiment. Without expressing it in words, he suggested to this charming creature the idea of playing for him the sublime rôle played by Rebecca in *Ivanhoe:* of loving and shielding him. The whole interview was carried on in the ethereal regions of sentiment. The myosotis is no bluer, the lily is no purer, the brow of the seraph no fairer than were the images, the words and the animated, radiant brow of this artist, who might have sent his conversation to his publisher. He played his rôle of reptile to perfection, he dangled before the countess's eyes the brilliant

colors of the fatal apple. Marie left the ball suffering from remorse that was akin to hope, tickled by compliments that flattered her vanity, moved to the deepest recesses of her heart, entrapped by her very virtues, seduced by her pity for misfortune.

Perhaps Madame de Manerville had guided Vandenesse to the salon where his wife was talking with Nathan; perhaps he had been there of his own motion, looking for Marie to take her home; perhaps his conversation had given new life to deadened chagrin. However that may be, when she went to him to ask him for his arm, his wife found him in a reverie, with clouded brow. The countess feared that she had been seen. As soon as she was alone in the carriage with Félix, she bestowed her most coaxing smile upon him and said:

"Weren't you talking with Madame de Manerville, my dear?"

Félix had not emerged from the underbrush into which his wife led him by a delicious little quarrel on that theme when the carriage drove into their courtyard. It was the first stratagem dictated by love. Marie was overjoyed with her triumph over the man who had hitherto seemed so superior to her. She tasted the first thrill of delight afforded by indispensable success.

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In a passageway between Rue Basse-du-Rempart and Rue Neuve-des-Mathurins, on the third floor of a narrow, ugly house, Raoul had a small, comfortless, bare, uninviting suite of rooms, where his home was for the general public, for literary neophytes, for his creditors, and for the different varieties of pests and bores who should be kept at the threshold of a man's private life. His real domicile, the scene of his grandeur, the stage upon which he acted, was at Mademoiselle Florine's, a second-rate actress to whom Nathan's friends, certain newspapers and some few authors had for ten years past awarded a place among illustrious artists. For ten years Raoul had been so closely attached to this woman that he passed half his life with her; he took his meals there, when he had no friend to entertain and no invitation to dine out.

Florine combined absolutely corrupt morals with exquisite wit, which constant intercourse with artists had developed, and which became keener every day. Wit is supposed to be a rare accomplishment among actors. It is so natural to suppose that people who spend their lives displaying everything on the outside have nothing within! But, if we consider the small number of actors and actresses in every generation, and the multitude of dramatic authors and fascinating women these people have

furnished, it is easy to refute that opinion, which is founded upon a criticism everlastingly made upon dramatic artists, who are charged, one and all, with losing sight of their personal feelings in the mechanical expression of the passions, whereas they really employ no other forces than those of wit, memory and imagination. Great artists, as Napoléon said, are beings who intercept at will the communication established by nature between the feelings and the thought. Molière and Talma in their old age were more amorous than the average man. Compelled to listen to journalists who divine everything by calculation, to authors who foresee and talk about everything, and to watch certain political characters, who made the most of every sally he heard in her salon, Florine presented a combination of angel and devil which made her worthy to receive these roués; she enchanted them by her sang-froid. Her abnormal qualities of mind and heart pleased them beyond description. Her house, enriched by tributes from her lovers, was furnished with the exaggerated magnificence characteristic of women who care little for the price of things, but only for the things themselves, and estimate their value by their caprice; who in a fit of rage shatter a fan or a vinaigrette a queen might envy, and raise an uproar if you break a porcelain dish worth ten francs, out of which their little dogs lap.

Her dining-room, filled to overflowing with the choicest offerings, will serve to convey an idea of the chaotic aspect of this disdainful, royal

magnificence. Everywhere, even on the ceiling, was a carved wainscoting of natural oak, relieved by mouldings of unburnished gold, the panels framed with children playing with chimeras, in which lights twinkled, shining here upon a sketch by Decamps, there upon a plaster angel holding a *bénitier* presented by Antonin Moine; farther on, a dainty picture by Eugène Devéria, the sombre figure of a Spanish alchemist by Louis Boulanger, an autograph letter from Lord Byron to Caroline in an ebony frame carved by Elschoet; opposite, a letter from Napoléon to Joséphine. All this arranged with no attempt at symmetry, but with imperceptible art. One's wits were taken by surprise, as it were. There was a touch of coquetry and a free-and-easy air, two qualities which are found together only in an artist's quarters. Upon the beautifully carved wooden mantel-piece there was nothing but a curious Florentine statue of ivory, attributed to Michael-Angelo, representing an ourang-outang finding a woman in the dress of a young shepherd, the original of which is in the Treasury at Vienna; on each side were torch-holders carved by some chisel of the Renaissance. A Boule clock, upon a tortoise-shell pedestal incrusted with arabesques of copper, glistened in the centre of a panel, between two statuettes escaped from some dismantled abbey. In the corners, lamps of regal magnificence burned upon their pedestals; with them some manufacturer had paid for a few sonorous commonplaces as to the necessity of having lamps perfectly fitted to

Japanese vases. Upon a marvelous *étagère* was paraded a valuable service of plate doughtily won in battle where some English lord had acknowledged the ascendancy of the French nation; there too, were porcelain ornaments with raised figures; in fine, the exquisite luxury of the artist who has no other capital than her furniture.

The violet chamber was like the dream of a ballet-dancer at her début; velvet curtains lined with satin, draped over a misty veil of tulle; ceiling of white cashmere with raised figures in violet satin; at the foot of the bed a rug of ermine; in the bed, whose curtains were like a lily turned upside down, was a lantern by which to read the newspapers before the public saw them. A yellow salon, embellished with ornaments of the color of Florentine bronze, was in perfect harmony with all this splendor; but an exact description would make these pages resemble the announcement of a sale by judicial decree. To find the like of all these lovely things one must have gone a few steps away, to Rothschild's.

Sophie Grignoult, christened Florine by a process of baptism not unusual on the stage, made her first appearances at second-rate theatres, notwithstanding her beauty. Her success and her fortune she owed to Raoul Nathan. The close association of these two destinies, which is not of rare occurrence in the dramatic and literary world, in no way injured Raoul, who observed the proprieties like a man of excellent judgment. But there was no stability to

Florine's fortune. Her uncertain income depended upon her engagements and her vacations, and barely paid for her clothes and her housekeeping. Nathan contributed some small sums levied upon new industrial enterprises; but, although he was always gallant to her and took care of her, there was nothing regular or certain about his patronage. This uncertainty, this life in the air, did not terrify Florine. Florine believed in her talent, she believed in her beauty. Her robust faith had something comical in it to those who heard her mortgage her future thereon when they ventured to remonstrate with her.

"I shall have *rentes* when it suits my pleasure to have them," she would say. "I have fifty francs in the funds already."

No one understood how she could have been neglected for seven years, lovely as she was; but the fact is that Florine was enrolled as a supernumerary at thirteen, and made her *début* at an obscure theatre on the boulevards two years later. At fifteen, neither beauty nor talent exists; a woman is all promise. At the time of which we are writing she was twenty-eight, the age at which a French woman's beauty is at its height. What painters noticed first of all about Florine was a pair of glossy shoulders, with an olive tinge about the base of the neck, but hard and smooth; the light was reflected in them as in watered silk. When she turned her head, magnificent folds, the admiration of sculptors, were formed in her neck. Upon that magnificent

neck was perched the little head of a Roman empress, the well-poised, graceful, delicate, wilful head of Poppæa, intelligent, regular features, the smooth brow of the unreflecting woman who banishes care, but who can also be as obstinate as a mule and at such times will listen to nothing. This brow of hers, which seemed to have been fashioned with a single blow of the chisel, displayed to the best advantage her lovely chestnut hair which was almost always raised in front in two masses of equal height, *à la Romaine*, and arranged in a knot behind the head to give the head an appearance of greater length, and to relieve the whiteness of the neck by its color. Delicate black eyebrows, drawn by some Chinese painter, framed a pair of soft eyes with a network of pink blood vessels. Her pupils, blazing with vivid light, but marked with brown stripes like a tiger's skin, gave to her glance the cruel fixity of a wild beast's, and revealed the cool cunning of the courtesan. Her adorable gazelle-like eyes were of a beautiful gray, fringed with long black lashes, a charming contrast which made still more apparent their expression of watchful, calm licentiousness; there were black rings that told of weariness; but the artistic way in which she could roll the pupil into the corner or to the top of her eye, to watch or to assume an air of meditation, her manner of keeping it perfectly still and causing it to gleam its brightest without moving her head or disturbing the immobility of her countenance—a trick learned on the stage—and the animation of her gaze when it

seemed to embrace a whole great hall as she looked about in search of some person, made hers the most terrible, the softest and the most extraordinary eyes in the world. Rouge had destroyed the delicious, transparent coloring of her cheeks, whose flesh was very delicate; but, if she could no longer blush or turn pale, she had a slender nose, intersected by passionate pink nostrils, made expressly to express the irony and the mockery of Molière's servants. Her sensual, dissipated mouth was embellished by the ridges of the furrow that attached the upper lip to the nose. Her white chin, somewhat coarse in outline, indicated the violence of her passions. Her hands and arms were worthy of a queen. But she had the short, thick foot which is an indelible sign of obscure birth. Never did inheritance cause more anxiety. Florine had tried everything, except amputation, to change it. Her feet were as obstinate as the Bretons to whom she owed her birth; they resisted all the professors, all varieties of treatment. She wore long shoes stuffed with cotton inside to make it appear that she had a curving instep. She was of medium height, threatened with obesity, but erect and well-made.

Morally speaking, she was thoroughly at home in all the pretty tricks and petty quarrels, the condiments and sweetmeats of her trade; she imparted a particularly delicious flavor to them when she played the child and interjected bits of mischievous philosophy in the midst of her innocent laughter. Apparently ignorant and frivolous, she was very

strong in figures and in all the details of commercial jurisprudence. She had gone through so much misery before the dawning of her precarious success! She knew life in all its forms, from that which begins with Brie cheese to that which toys disdainfully with pineapple fritters; from that which cooks and washes in the chimney-corner of an attic with a clay oven to that which convokes the ban and arriere-ban of pot-bellied chefs and impudent scullions. She had kept her credit in repair without killing it. She knew all about the things that honest women know nothing of, she spoke all languages; she was of the common people by virtue of her experience, and noble by virtue of her distinguished beauty. It was difficult to take her by surprise, for she always imagined everything, as a spy does, or a judge, or an old statesman, and thus was able to see into everything. She knew what method to adopt with tradespeople and their wiles, she knew the value of things as well as a professional appraiser. When she was stretched out in her long chair, like a fair and blooming young bride, holding her lines in her hand and committing them to memory, you would have said she was a child of sixteen, artless and ignorant and weak, without other artifice than her innocence. But let an importunate creditor appear, she would sit up like a startled fawn and swear a good round oath.

"Look here, my dear man! your impertinence is a high rate of interest to pay for the money I owe you," she would say; "I'm tired of seeing you;

send me some bailiffs, I prefer them to your idiotic face."

Florine gave delightful dinners, concerts, and very popular evening parties, where the gambling was fast and furious. Her friends of her own sex were all beautiful. No old woman was ever seen under her roof; she was an entire stranger to jealousy and looked upon it as an admission of inferiority. She had known Coralie and La Torpille, she knew the Tullias, Euphrasie, the Aquilinas, Madame du Val-Noble, Mariette,—the women who pass through Paris like the white threads that float about in the air, nor does anyone know whence they come nor whither they go—queens to-day, slaves to-morrow; and the actresses too, her rivals, and the singers, in short, all the unconventional female society, good-humored, and attractive in its recklessness, whose Bohemian existence absorbs all those who allow themselves to be drawn into the mad whirl of its impetuosity and fervor and its contempt for the future. Although the Bohemian mode of life with all its lack of order held sway in her house, encouraged by the cheery laughter of the actress, the queen of the salon had ten fingers of her own and knew how to count better than any of her guests. There, were held the secret saturnalia of literature and art combined with politics and finance. There desire reigned supreme; there, spleen and caprice were held as sacred as honor and virtue in a bourgeois household. Thither came Blondet, Finot, Étienne Lousteau, her seventh lover and supposed

to be the first, Félicien Vernou, the newspaper writer, Couture, Bixiou, Rastignac at an earlier period, Claude Vignon the critic, Nucingen the banker, Du Tillet, Conti the composer, in brief, the whole devil-ridden legion of the most pitiless schemers of every sort; then there were the friends of the singers, dancers and actresses whom Florine knew. All these people loved or hated one another according to circumstances. This house of common resort, where celebrity in some direction was sufficient to entitle any one to admission, was, as it were, the brothel of wit, the galleys of intelligence; no one could enter there who had not stolen his fortune by legal means, or lived through ten years of poverty, or slaughtered two or three passions, or acquired celebrity of some sort by his books or his waistcoats, by a drama or a handsome turnout. Base plots were hatched there and ways of making money eagerly sought; they laughed at the émeutes they had fomented the day before, and weighed the chances of a rise or fall in the funds. Every man, on leaving the house, resumed the livery of his opinions; but there he could, without compromising himself, criticize his own party, admit the science and skilful play of his opponents, formulate thoughts which no one avows—say anything, in short, with the air of a man who could do anything. Paris is the only place in the world where such eclectic houses as this exist, houses where every taste, every vice, every opinion is made welcome with an appearance of decency. It cannot be said

either, that Florine is still a second-rate actress. Her life is not an idle life or to be envied. Many people, misled by the magnificent pedestal upon which the stage places a woman, fancy that her life is as joyous as a perpetual carnival. In many a porter's lodge, under the eaves of more than one attic, poor creatures, returning from the play, dream of pearls and diamonds, of dresses covered with gold and gorgeous stomachers; they seem to see themselves with jewels shining in their hair, they fancy themselves applauded, purchased, worshiped, removed from their surroundings; but they know nothing of the realities of this life of a riding-school horse, in which the actress is required to attend rehearsals under penalty of a fine, to listen to the reading of plays, and constantly to study new parts, at a time when two or three hundred plays a year are produced in Paris. Florine has to change her costume two or three times during every performance, and is often completely exhausted, half-dead, when she returns to her dressing-room. Then she is obliged to remove the red or white paint by profuse applications of cosmetic, and to wash off the powder if she has been playing an eighteenth-century part. She has hardly had time to dine. When she is playing, an actress can neither dress, nor eat, nor speak. Florine no longer has time for supper-parties. When she returns home after one of the performances which, in these days of ours, end the next day, has not she to make her toilette for the night and to give her orders for the morrow?

After going to bed at one or two o'clock in the morning, she must rise sufficiently early to look over her lines, select her costumes, explain them and try them on; then breakfast, read her billets-doux, answer them, labor with the contractors for applause, to be sure that her entrées and exits are properly looked after, and pay for the triumphs of the past month while purchasing in bulk those of the month now current. In the time of Saint-Genest a canonized actor, who fulfilled his religious duties and wore a hair-shirt, it is fair to suppose that the stage did not demand such ferocious activity. Florine is often obliged to say she is sick in order to be able to go into the country, bourgeois fashion, to pick wild flowers. But these purely mechanical occupations are nothing at all in comparison with the scheming to be carried on, the mortifications of wounded vanity, the preferences accorded by authors, rôles taken away or forced upon one, the exacting demands of actors, the malice of a rival, the fusillade of managers and newspaper critics who demand that two days' work be done in one. Hitherto there has been no thought of art, of the expression of the passions, of the details of the mimic art, of the essential requirements of the stage, where the blemishes that mar every manifestation of splendor are revealed by thousands of opera-glasses, —requirements that Talma, Lekain, Baron, Contat, Clairon, Champmeslé devoted their thoughts and their lives to satisfying. In those infernal wings, self-esteem has no sex; the triumphant artist,

man or woman, finds men and women against him.

As regards fortune, though Florine could command a reasonably large salary, it did not cover the cost of her stage toilette, which, to say nothing of costumes, required an enormous supply of shoes and long gloves, and included both evening dresses and street dresses. One-third of an actress's life is passed in begging, another in maintaining herself, and the last in defending herself: it is all work. If happiness is enjoyed with great gusto when it comes to such lives, it is because it is stolen, as it were, rarely attained, long hoped for, and found at last by chance amid hateful counterfeited pleasures and smiles at the pit.

To Florine, Raoul's power was like a protecting sceptre: he spared her much ennui and much anxiety, as the great nobles did for their mistresses in the old days, and like some old men to-day, who run and throw themselves at the feet of the critics when a word in some petty newspaper has alarmed their idol. She clung to him more than to a lover, she clung to him as to a pillar of strength, she cared for him as if he were her father, she deceived him as if he were her husband; but she would have sacrificed all for him. Raoul could do everything for her vanity as an actress, for the tranquillity of her self-esteem, for her future on the stage. Without the intervention of a great author, no great actress; we owed Champmeslé to Racine, as we owed Mars to Monvel and Andrieux. Florine could do nothing

for Raoul, but she would have been very glad to be useful or necessary to him. She relied upon the allurements of habit, she was always ready to open her salons, to display all her magnificence for his friends or in aid of his projects. In short, she aspired to be to him what Madame de Pompadour was to Louis XV. Other actresses envied Florine's position just as certain newspaper men envied Raoul's.

Now, those who have observed the inclination of the human mind toward contrasts and contraries, will understand how it was that after ten years of this disorderly Bohemian existence, full of ups and downs, of feasts and executions for debt, of sobriety and orgies, Raoul was irresistibly attracted toward a pure, chaste passion, toward the peaceful and harmonious abode of a great lady, just as the Comtesse Félix longed to introduce the torments of passion into her life, which had become monotonous by virtue of its abounding happiness. This law of life is the law of all the arts, which exist only by contrasts. A work accomplished without that resource is the supreme expression of genius, as the cloister is the greatest effort of the Christian.

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Upon returning home, Raoul found a short note from Florine, brought by her maid, but an unconquerable desire to sleep prevented him from reading it; he sought his couch, filled with delicious thoughts of the fresh, sweet love that was lacking in his life. Some hours later he read in that note important news which neither De Marsay nor Rastignac had divulged. The actress had learned from an indiscreet remark that the Chamber was to be dissolved after the session.

Raoul went at once to Florine's and sent for Blondet. In the actress's boudoir, Raoul and Émile, with their feet on the andirons, analyzed the political situation in France in 1834. On which side was the best opportunity for making one's fortune? They passed in review the pure republicans, the republicans who would have a president, the republicans without a republic, the constitutionals without a dynasty, the constitutionals with a dynasty, ministerial conservatives, ministerial absolutists; from these they passed to the Right favoring concessions, the aristocratic Right, the legitimist, Henri V. Right, the Carlist Right. As between the party of resistance and the party of progress, it was impossible to hesitate: it would have been as sensible to discuss the respective merits of life and death.

At this time, a multitude of newspapers, established to suit every possible shade of opinion, were crying out against the horrible political hurly-burly, called *gachis—mess*—by a soldier. Blondet, the most judicious mind of the age, but judicious in the interests of others always, never in his own, like those advocates who manage their own business badly, was sublime in such private discussions as this. He advised Nathan not to change sides abruptly.

"Napoléon said that young republics aren't made with old monarchies. So, my dear fellow, become the hero, the mainstay, the creator of the Left Centre in the Chamber that is to be, and you'll get ahead in politics. Once admitted, once in the government, you are whatever you choose to be, you hold every opinion that prevails!"

Nathan decided to found a daily newspaper devoted to politics, to be the absolute master of it, to attach to it one of the small newspapers in which the press abounds, and to establish connections with a review. The press had been the means of making so many fortunes among his acquaintances that he paid no heed to the advice Blondet gave him, not to trust to it. Blondet declared that it was a wretched speculation, the number of newspapers fighting for subscribers at that time was so great, and the press seemed to him to be such a worn out weapon. Raoul, relying upon his pretended friendships and his courage, rushed boldly into the scheme; he rose to his feet with a burst of pride and said:

"I shall succeed!"

"You haven't a sou!"

"I'll write a drama!"

"It will fail."

"Very good, it shall fail," said Nathan.

He made the circuit of Florine's apartment, followed by Blondet, who believed him mad; then he glanced with a covetous eye at the wealth that was piled up there; Blondet understood him.

"There's a hundred thousand francs and more here," said he.

"Yes," said Raoul sighing, as he stood by Florine's sumptuous bed; "but I would prefer to pass the rest of my life peddling knickknacks on the boulevards and live on fried potatoes, than sell a single cup out of this room."

"Not a cup," said Blondet, "but everything! Ambition is like death, it must lay its hand on everything, for it knows that life is close at its heels."

"No! a hundred times no! I would accept anything from my countess of yesterday, but to steal Florine's shell?"

"Pull down her mint," said Blondet with a tragic air, "smash the dies and stamps—that's a serious matter."

"As far as I can understand, you propose to go into politics instead of sticking to the theatre," said Florine, suddenly making her appearance.

"Yes, my girl, yes," said Raoul good-humoredly, putting his arm around her neck and kissing her on the forehead. "What! you pout? Shall you lose

anything by it? won't the minister be better able than the journalist to get the queen of the boards a good engagement? Won't you have plenty of parts and plenty of vacations?"

"Where'll you get the money?" said she.

"At my uncle's," Raoul replied.

Florine knew Raoul's *uncle*. That word symbolized the usurer, as *aunt*, in vulgar parlance, signifies pawnbroker.

"Don't you disturb yourself, my little jewel," said Blondet, tapping Florine on the shoulder, "I'll get Massol to help him, an advocate who, like all advocates, wants to be keeper of the seals for a day, Du Tillet, who wants to be a deputy, Finot, who is still at the helm of a small newspaper, and Plantin, who wants to be master of requests and is dabbling in a review. Yes, I will save him from himself; we'll have Étienne Lousteau here and get him to write the literary article, and Claude Vignon for critic; Félicien Vernou will be the managing woman of the paper, the advocate will work, Du Tillet will look after the Bourse and business matters, and we'll see where all these strong wills and all these slaves united will bring us."

"To the insane asylum or the ministry, where all those who are ruined in body or mind bring up," said Raoul.

"When will you settle matters with them?"

"Here," said Raoul, "five days hence."

"You must tell me what amount of money you will need," said Florine simply.

"Why, the advocate and Du Tillet and Raoul can't go into the thing without a hundred thousand francs each," said Blondet. "The paper will go on then for eighteen months, the time it takes a man to rise or fall here in Paris."

Florine gave a little nod of approbation. The two friends took a cab to kidnap associates, pens, brains and interests. The fair actress meanwhile sent for four wealthy dealers in furniture, curiosities, pictures and jewels. These men entered the sanctuary and inventoried everything therein contained, as if Florine were dead. She threatened them with a sale at public auction in case they should do violence to their consciences in expectation of a better opportunity. She had made an impression, she told them, upon an English nobleman by her acting in a play of the Middle Ages, and wanted to get rid of all her movable wealth in order to make him think she was poor and induce him to give her a magnificent house which she would furnish in a way to rival Rothschild. But in spite of all she could do to inveigle them, they would give her only seventy thousand francs for the whole lot, which was worth a hundred and fifty thousand. Florine, who would not have given two sous for it, agreed to deliver it all in a week's time for eighty thousand.

"You can take it or leave it," said she.

The bargain was concluded. When the tradesmen had decamped, Florine leaped for joy like the little hills of King David. She cut a thousand

capers, for she had no idea she was so rich. When Raoul returned, she pretended to be angry with him. She said that she had thought it over, and that he had deserted her; men didn't go from one party to another, nor from the stage to the Chamber without a motive; she had a rival! How unerring is instinct! She made him swear eternal love to her. Five days later, she gave the most splendid banquet imaginable. The new journal was baptized under her roof in oceans of wine and jests, of oaths of fidelity, of good-fellowship and serious co-operation. The name, forgotten to-day as are the *Libéral*, the *Communal*, the *Departemental*, the *Garde National*, the *Féderal*, the *Impartial*, was something ending in *al*, which was destined to be very ephemeral.

After the numerous descriptions of orgies which marked this literary era—so few of which took place in the attics where they were written—it is a difficult matter to describe this one of Florine's. A single word only. At three o'clock in the morning, Florine was able to undress and go to bed as if she were alone, although no one had gone away. All these lights of the age were sleeping like beasts. When the packers and porters and draymen arrived, early in the morning, to remove all the famous actress's magnificence, she laughed heartily as she saw them lift up these celebrities like heavy pieces of furniture and deposit them on the floor. Thus all the lovely things vanished. Florine banished all her souvenirs to the warerooms, where no passer-by

could tell from their appearance where or how those flowers of luxury had been paid for. By agreement, certain specified things were left with Florine until evening; her bed, and her table and crockery, so that she could give her guests their breakfast. Having fallen asleep under the luxurious canopy of wealth the famous wits awoke surrounded by the cold, dismantled walls of poverty, covered with the marks of nails and disfigured by the odd, incongruous things that collect behind hangings like the ropes and cords behind the decorations at the opera.

"Why, Florine, the poor girl's had an execution in here!" cried Bixiou, one of the revellers. "Hands in your pockets! a subscription!"

As he spoke, the whole party leaped to their feet. All their pockets turned inside out produced thirty-seven francs, which Raoul jocosely handed to the smiling hostess. The happy courtesan raised her head from her pillow, and pointed to the coverlid where there was a pile of banknotes, as thick as in the days when a courtesan's pillow was worth as much a year, good years and bad.

Raoul called Blondet.

"I understand," said the latter. "The rascal levied on herself without saying a word. Well done, my little angel!"

This exploit caused the actress to be carried in triumph, *en déshabillé* as she was, to the dining-room by the few friends who remained. The advocate and the bankers had taken their leave. That evening, Florine had a dazzling triumph at the

theatre. The story of her sacrifice had spread through the hall.

"I should rather be applauded for my talent," her rival said to her in the green-room.

"That's a very natural desire for an artist who has never been applauded as yet for anything but her good-nature," she retorted.

During the evening, Florine's maid had moved her belongings to Raoul's apartment on Passage Sandrié. The journalist was to take up his quarters in the house where the offices of the newspaper had been opened.

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Such was the rival of the chaste and pure Madame de Vandenesse. Raoul's caprice bound the actress and the countess together as with a ring: a ghastly bond which a duchess severed, in the days of Louis XV., by causing Adrienne Lecouvreur to be poisoned,—a sweet revenge easily understood when one considers the enormity of the offence.

Florine did not interfere with the early stages of Raoul's passion. She anticipated financial complications in the difficult undertaking on which he had embarked, and applied for a furlough of six months. Raoul conducted the negotiation for her with great ardor and achieved success in a way to make him still dearer to Florine. With the good sense of the peasant in La Fontaine's fable, who makes sure of his dinner while his betters are thinking about it, the actress went into the provinces and abroad to secure the ducats, in order to support the famous man while he was on the hunt for power.

Hitherto but few painters have attacked the subject of love as it exists in the more exalted social spheres, abounding in grandeur and secret misery, terrible in its desires defeated by the most absurd, most commmonplace accidents, and often shipwrecked by weariness. Perhaps we may catch a few glimpses of it here.

On the day following Lady Dudley's ball,

although not a word in the nature of the most timid declaration had been spoken on either side, Marie believed that Raoul loved her, according to the tenor of her dreams, and Raoul knew that Marie had chosen him for her lover. Although neither of them had arrived at that advanced stage at which men and women alike cut short the preliminaries, they were both making rapid progress toward the goal. Raoul, surfeited with pleasure, was bound for an ideal world; while Marie, who was as far removed as possible from the thought of sinning, did not dream that she could leave that world behind her. Thus there never was a passion more innocent and purer, in fact, than the love of Raoul and Marie; nor was there ever one more ardent or more delightful in anticipation. The countess's mind was filled with ideas suited to the days of chivalry, but completely modernized. In the spirit of her rôle, her husband's antipathy for Nathan ceased to be an obstacle to her love. The less deserving of esteem Raoul had proved to be, the grander she would have been. The poet's perfervid conversation had wakened more of an echo in her breast than in her heart. Charity was aroused by the voice of desire. That queen of all the virtues almost justified in the countess's eyes the emotions, the joys, the violent impulses of love. She thought it was a glorious thing to be a sort of human Providence to Raoul. What a sweet thought! to sustain with her feeble white hand this colossus whose feet of clay she would not see, to supply life where it was lacking,

to be in secret the creatress of a great fortune, to assist a man of genius to contend with fate and overcome it, to embroider his scarf for the joust, to furnish him with weapons, to give him an amulet against sorcery, and a healing balm for his wounds!

In the case of a woman educated as Marie had been, and devout and noble-souled as she was, love was certain to take the shape of a sort of voluptuous charity. Herein lies the explanation of her forwardness. Virtuous sentiments compromise themselves with superb disdain not unlike the shamelessness of a courtesan. As soon, therefore, as she had satisfied herself, by specious sophistry, that she was not violating her conjugal faith, the countess plunged heart and soul into the pleasure of loving Raoul. Thereupon the most trivial incidents of life acquired a charm for her. Her boudoir, where she sat and thought of him, she transformed into a sanctuary. There was nothing there, even to her dainty writing-desk, that did not awaken in her heart the thousand and one delights of such a connection; she would have letters to read and hide and answer. The toilette, the sublime poetry of a woman's life, whose charm had worn off or was unappreciated by her, reappeared, endowed with a magic power hitherto unsuspected. Her toilette suddenly became to her what it is to all women, a constant manifestation of her inmost thoughts, a language, a symbol. How much pleasure may be derived from a costume designed to please *him*, to do *him* honor! She devoted her attention most innocently to the fascinating

little artifices which occupy so large a part of the lives of Parisian women and which give ample meaning to everything you see at their homes or upon their persons.

Very few women run about to silk merchants and milliners and fashionable dressmakers in their own interest alone. When they are old they no longer think of their dress. When you see, as you walk along the street, a female figure stopping for a moment in front of a show-window, look carefully at her: "Would he like me better in that?" is a phrase writ large upon her cheerful face, in her eyes glistening with hope, in the smile that plays about her lips.

Lady Dudley's ball took place on a Saturday evening; on Monday the countess went to the opera, drawn thither by the certainty that she should see Raoul there. And there he was, planted on one of the staircases leading to the amphitheatre stalls. He lowered his eyes when the countess entered her box. With what bliss did Madame de Vandenesse take note of the unwonted care her lover had bestowed upon his toilette! That scoffer at the laws of fashion exhibited a well-combed head of hair with perfumed oil glistening in the curves of the myriad curls; his waistcoat conformed to the prevailing style, his cravat was securely tied, the folds of his shirt were irreproachably clean and smooth. His hands seemed very white beneath the yellow gloves he wore in obedience to the decree then in force. His arms were folded across his

chest as if he were posing for his portrait, superbly indifferent to the whole great audience, but bursting with ill-restrained impatience. His eyes, although cast down, seemed to be turned toward the red velvet box-rail on which Marie's arm rested. Félix, seated in the other corner of the box, had his back turned to Nathan. The clever countess had seated herself so that she could fix her eyes upon the pillar against which Raoul was leaning. And so, all in a moment, Marie had caused this man of brains to abjure his cynicism in the matter of clothing. The most humble as well as the most exalted of women is deeply moved to see the first manifestation of her power in such a metamorphosis as this. Every change is a confession of subjection.

"They were right, there is much happiness in being understood," she said to herself as she thought of her hateful mentors.

When the two lovers had taken in the whole hall with the swift glance that sees everything, they exchanged a look of intelligence. It was to both as if the dew from heaven had fallen in a refreshing shower upon their hearts, parched by long waiting. "I have been here for an hour in hell and now the gates of heaven are opening," said Raoul's eyes.—"I knew you were here, but am I my own mistress?" the countess's eyes replied.

Thieves, spies, lovers, diplomats, slaves of all kinds in short, but no others, know the resources and the delights of the glance. They alone know

all the possibilities in the way of tenderness, mutual understanding, wrath and malice contained in the modifications of that soul-laden ray of light.

Raoul felt his passion wince under the spur of necessity, but wax great at the sight of the obstacles in its path. Between the step on which he stood and the box of the Comtesse Félix de Vandenesse, the distance was scarcely thirty feet, but it was impossible for him to ignore that distance. In the breast of a man of fierce passions, who hitherto had found but a brief interval between a desire and its gratification, that stern and impassable abyss aroused a fierce longing to leap with a tiger's spring to where the countess sat. In a paroxysm of rage, he tried to feel the ground. He bowed openly to the countess, who responded with one of those slight, disdainful movements of the head, with which women put an end to any inclination their adorers may have to begin again.

Comte Félix turned to see who had attracted his wife's attention; he saw Nathan, did not bow to him, but seemed rather to call him to account for his audacity, and turned slowly around again, saying a few words evidently in approbation of his wife's feigned contempt. It was clear that the door of the box was closed to Nathan, who darted a threatening glance at Félix. Anyone who saw this glance, would have interpreted it by repeating a remark of Florine's: "Before long you won't be able to put your hat on!"

Madame d'Espard, one of the most impertinent

women of her day, had seen the whole episode from her box; she raised her voice, exclaiming "bravo!" without any special occasion therefor. Raoul, who stood below her, at last turned his head; he bowed to her and received in return a gracious smile which said to him so plainly: "If they shut you out there, come here!" that he left his pillar and paid a visit to Madame d'Espard. It was well for him to show himself there in order to teach that wretched little Monsieur de Vandenesse that celebrity was of equal value with noble blood, and that all emblazoned doors turned upon their hinges when Nathan knocked at them. The marchioness forced him to sit facing her at the front of the box. She proposed to put him to the question.

"Madame Félix de Vandenesse is enchanting this evening," she said, complimenting him upon her toilette as she might have complimented him upon a book he had published the day before.

"Yes," said Raoul carelessly, "the marabou feathers are wonderfully becoming; but she's very faithful to them, she wore them night before last," he added with a nonchalant air, as if to repudiate by this criticism the sweet complicity of which the marchioness accused him.

"You know the proverb?" she replied. "Every pleasure has its to-morrow."

At the game of repartee, literary celebrities are not always as strong as marchionesses. Raoul adopted the course of pretending to misunderstand, the last resource of men of wit.

"The proverb is true in my case," he said, glancing at the marchioness with a gallant air.

"My dear boy, your declaration comes too late for me to accept it," she said, laughingly. "Come, come, don't be such a prude; you thought Madame de Vandenesse was lovely in marabou feathers at the ball yesterday morning; she knows it, so she wears them again for your benefit. She loves you and you adore her; it's a little sudden, but I don't see why it's not perfectly natural. If I were mistaken you wouldn't be twisting one of your gloves about like a man who's half crazy because he's sitting by my side instead of being in his idol's box, —from which he's just been turned away by a formal expression of scorn,—and listening to me say in a whisper what he'd like to hear said aloud."

Raoul was, in fact, twisting one of his gloves and exhibiting an astonishingly white hand.

"She has induced you," she said, staring at his hand in the most impertinent way, "to make sacrifices that you never made to society at large. She ought to be enchanted with her success; no doubt she will be a little proud of it; but if I were in her place I might be even more so. She was nothing but a bright woman, and now she's going to be held up as a woman of genius. You're going to paint her for us in one of the charming books you know so well how to write. My dear, don't forget Vandenesse,—do it for me. Upon my word, he's too sure of himself. I wouldn't put on that radiant expression for the Olympian Jupiter, the only one of

the heathen gods who was exempt from accident, they say."

"Madame," cried Raoul, "you give me credit for a very base heart, if you deem me capable of making a business matter of my feelings or my love. I should prefer to such literary baseness as that, the English custom of putting a rope around a woman's neck and leading her to market."

"But I know Marie—she'll ask you to do it."

"She's incapable of it," said Raoul hotly.

"Do you know her so well, pray?"

Nathan began to laugh at himself, he a deviser of scenes, for allowing himself to be caught by a stage trick.

"The comedy's being played here in your box, and not there," he said, pointing to the footlights.

He took her opera-glass and began to survey the audience to keep himself in countenance.

"Are you angry with me?" said the marchioness, looking at him out of the corner of her eye. "Shouldn't I have known your secret all the same? We shall easily be reconciled. Come and see me; I receive on Wednesdays; the dear countess won't miss an evening as soon as she finds you are likely to be there. I shall be the gainer by it. Sometimes I see her between four and five o'clock, and I'll be a good girl and add you to the small number of particular friends I admit at that hour."

"Well, well," said Raoul, "what people there are in the world! they told me you were a wicked creature."

"Wicked!" said she, "so I am when there's occasion for it. Mustn't I defend myself? But as to your countess, I adore her; you will be satisfied with her, for she is charming. You will be the first man whose name has been engraved on her heart with the childish joy that leads all lovers, even corporals, to carve their ciphers on the bark of trees. A woman's first love is a delicious fruit. Later on, you see, there's a touch of science in our affections and our coquetry. An old woman like me can say whatever she pleases, for she's afraid of nothing, not even a journalist. In the autumn of life we know how to make you happy; but when we begin to love, we are happy ourselves, and thus we flatter your pride in a thousand ways. At such times, everything is unexpected and enchanting, for our hearts are overflowing with artlessness. You are too much of a poet not to prefer the flower to the fruit. I'll expect you six months from now."

Raoul, like all criminals, resorted to a system of denial; but he thereby furnished this bold fencer with additional weapons. Finding himself involved before long in the meshes of one of the cleverest and most dangerous of those private conversations in which Parisian women excel, he feared lest he might be surprised into making admissions which the marchioness would at once make the most of with her mocking tongue, he discreetly withdrew as Lady Dudley entered the box.

"Well," said the Englishwoman to the marchioness, "how far along are they?"

"They are madly in love with each other. Nathan has just told me so."

"I would have liked to have him uglier than he is," said Lady Dudley, casting a viperish glance at Félix. "Otherwise he's just what I wanted: he's the son of a Jew pawnbroker who died a bankrupt soon after his marriage; but his mother was a Catholic, and unfortunately she made a Christian of him."

These facts concerning his origin, which Nathan was at such pains to conceal, Lady Dudley had succeeded in discovering, and she was enjoying in anticipation the pleasure it would afford her to extract therefrom some crushing epigram against Vandenesse.

"To think that I just now invited him to come to my house!" exclaimed the marchioness.

"Didn't I receive him yesterday?" rejoined Lady Dudley. "There are pleasures which cost us very dear, my love."

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The news of the mutual passion of Raoul and Madame de Vandenesse was industriously circulated among the people of fashion during the evening, not without arousing incredulity and contradiction; but the countess was defended by her friends, Lady Dudley, Mesdames d'Espard and De Manerville, with ambiguous warmth well calculated to induce belief in the report.

Impelled by necessity, Raoul went to Madame d'Espard's on Wednesday evening, and met the aristocratic company usually to be found there. As Félix did not accompany his wife, Raoul was able to exchange a few words with Marie, words more expressive by reason of the tone in which they were uttered than of the ideas conveyed by them. The countess, warned by Madame Octave de Camps to be on her guard against evil tongues, realized her position in the eyes of the world and made Raoul realize it.

Amid that gorgeous throng, the only pleasure enjoyed by either consisted in the sensations, so keenly relished at such times, that are aroused by the voice, the gestures, the attitudes, the ideas of a person who is dear to one. The heart grasps madly at trifles. Sometimes the eyes of both are fixed upon the same object, embodying therein, so to speak, a thought conceived, transmitted and understood. We remark with admiration the foot put

slightly forward during a conversation, the restless hand, the fingers busily occupied in taking up and putting down and toying with some knickknack in a significant way. Ideas no longer speak, nor words, but things; they say so much that a man in love often leaves it for others to bring a cup of tea or the sugar-bowl or the thousand and one things his beloved may ask for, because he fears that he may reveal his confusion to eyes that seem to see nothing, but see everything. A thousand desires, wild wishes and passionate thoughts are compressed in a glance. The pressure of the hand, unseen by the thousand Argus eyes, acquires the eloquence of a long letter, the rapture of a kiss. Love grows on all that it denies itself, and leans upon every obstacle to renew its strength. And finally these obstacles, more often cursed than crossed, are cut down and cast into the fire to keep it alive. At such times, women can measure the extent of their power in the small dimensions to which a boundless passion is reduced, as it recoils upon itself, conceals itself in a thirsty glance, in a contraction of the nerves, behind a commonplace courteous phrase. How many times, upon the lowest step of a staircase, is a man rewarded by a single word for all the unheard-of torture, the meaningless conversation of a whole evening!

Raoul, a man who cared little for society, gave free rein to his wrath in his speech, and was in a fever of excitement. Everyone heard the roars inspired by the restraint which artists find it so hard

to endure. This frenzy, à la Roland, this wit that crushed and shattered everything, using epigram as a club, intoxicated Marie and entertained the company as if they were watching the mad career of a bull, decked out with flags in a Spanish bull ring.

"It's of no use for you to knock everybody down, you won't succeed in creating a solitude," said Blondet.

This hint restored Raoul's presence of mind, and he ceased to make an exhibition of his vexation. The marchioness came and offered him a cup of tea, and said so that Madame de Vandenesse could hear:

"Really you're very amusing, pray come and see me some day at four o'clock."

Raoul took offence at the word *amusing*, although it was used as a pretext for the invitation. He began to listen like those actors who stare about the theatre instead of keeping their thoughts on the stage. Blondet had compassion on him.

"My dear fellow," said he, taking him into a corner, "you act in society as if you were at Florine's. Here it isn't the thing to lose your temper or make long speeches, but you should say a clever word or two now and then, assume a tranquil expression just when you feel the greatest desire to throw people out of the window, jest mildly, make a pretence of paying marked attention to the woman you adore, and not roll over on your back like a donkey in the middle of the road. Here, my dear fellow, we love according to rule. Either carry off Madame

de Vandenesse, or act like a gentleman. You're too much like the lover in one of your books."

Nathan hung his head as he listened; he was like a lion caught in the toils.

"I'll never set my foot inside these doors again," said he. "This papier-maché marchioness sells her tea too dear. She thinks me amusing! I understand now why Saint-Just guillotined all such people."

"You'll come again to-morrow."

Blondet was a true prophet. The passions are as cowardly as they are cruel. The next day, after wavering a long while between: "I will go," and "I won't go," Raoul left his associates in the middle of an important discussion, and hurried to Madame d'Espard's on Faubourg Saint-Honoré. When he saw Rastignac's stylish cabriolet drive in as he was paying his cabman, his vanity was wounded; he determined to have a stylish cabriolet himself and the tiger to go with it.

The countess's carriage was in the courtyard. At that sight, Raoul's heart swelled with delight. Marie was going forward under the impulsion of her desires like the hand of a clock kept in motion by its spring. She was stretched out in an easy chair at the corner of the fireplace in the small salon. Instead of looking up at Nathan when he was announced, she looked at him in the mirror, feeling sure that the mistress of the house would turn toward him. Love is hunted down so persistently in society that it is forced to resort to such

little stratagems; it gives life to mirrors and muffs and fans, to a multitude of things whose utility is not at once demonstrated and which many women wear out without making use of them.

"Monsieur le Ministre," said Madame d'Espard to Raoul, introducing De Marsay to him by a glance, "was insisting, just as you came in, that the royalists and the republicans understand one another; you ought to know something about it?"

"Suppose it should be so," said Raoul, "where's the harm? We hate the same object; we are agreed in our hatred, but we differ in our love. That's the whole story."

"It's a curious alliance at all events," said De Marsay, embracing Comtesse Félix and Raoul in a single glance.

"It won't last long," said Rastignac, who thought a little too much about politics, like all new recruits.

"What do you say to it, my dear friend?" Madame d'Espard asked the countess.

"I don't understand politics at all."

"You will go into it, madame," said De Marsay, "and then you will be our enemy twice over."

Nathan and Marie did not understand the allusion until De Marsay had gone. Rastignac followed him, and Madame d'Espard accompanied them to the door of her first salon. The two lovers forgot the minister's epigrams, for they found that they were blessed with a few moments to themselves. Marie quickly drew off her glove and gave her hand to Raoul, who

took it and kissed it as if he were only eighteen. The countess's glance expressed such whole-hearted, noble affection that Raoul's eyes were wet with the tears that men of a nervous temperament always have at their command.

"Where can I see you? where can I speak to you?" he said. "I shall die if I must always disguise my voice, my look, my heart, my love."

Marie, deeply moved by his tears, promised to drive in the Bois whenever the weather was not too bad. This promise gave Raoul more happiness than Florine had given him in five years.

"I have so much to say to you! I suffer so from the silence to which we are condemned!"

The countess was gazing at him as if fascinated, unable to reply, when the marchioness returned.

"How's this! you couldn't find any answer for De Marsay?" she said as she came in.

"We must respect the dead," said Raoul. "Don't you see that he's on his last legs? Rastignac is his nurse, he hopes to be mentioned in the will."

The countess pretended that she had calls to make; she was anxious to be gone in order not to betray herself. For that quarter of an hour Raoul had sacrificed precious time and his most pressing interests. Marie as yet knew nothing of the details of this life of a bird on the tree, combined with most complicated business interests and most exacting toil.

When two persons united by undying love lead lives knit together more closely every day by bonds

of confidence, by scrutinizing together such difficulties as arise; when two hearts exchange regrets each night and morning, as their mouths exchange sighs, share the same agonies of suspense, beat fast together at sight of an obstacle, then everything counts; a woman knows how much love may be expressed in an averted glance, how much effort expended in a rapid journey; she keeps her hands busy, goes and comes, hopes, suffers with the hard-working, worried man; her complaints are addressed to things; she does not doubt, for she knows and appreciates the details of life. But at the outset of a passion in which so much ardor and suspicion and unreasonableness are displayed, and where neither party really knows the other; with lazy women, at whose door love must always be doing sentry-duty; with women who have an exaggerated idea of their dignity and are determined to be obeyed in everything, even when they give orders for the commission of a crime that may ruin a man, love, in Paris in our time, demands the performance of impossible tasks. Women of the world have remained under the sway of the traditions of the eighteenth century, when everyone had a fixed and definite position. Few women know aught of the perplexities that beset the existence of most men, all of whom have a position to make for themselves, a fortune to establish on a firm basis, glory in embryo. To-day, the men whose fortune is established can be counted; only the old men have time to love, the young are rowing in the galleys of ambition, even as Nathan

was pulling an oar there. The women, still unresigned to this change in manners, loan the time of which they have an over-supply to those who have not enough; they have no conception of any other occupations, any other aim than their own. Although the lover may have overcome the Lernean hydra to reach their feet, he has no credit for it; everything else is blotted out by the joy of seeing him; they are grateful to him only for their own emotions, without taking the trouble to ascertain what they may have cost. If they have invented, during their hours of idleness, one of those stratagems which they have at command, they exhibit its brilliancy as if it were a jewel. You have wrenched aside the iron bars of necessity, while they were putting on the mittens or adjusting the cloak of a ruse; to them the palm, and do not seek to wrest it from them. They are right too, for how can we refuse to sever every tie for a woman who does as much for us? They demand as much as they give.

Raoul realized when he came to himself how difficult it would be for him to conduct a love-affair in society, the ten-horse chariot of journalism, his dramatic productions and his unsavory business affairs.

"The paper will be detestable to-night," he said to himself as he left the house; "there won't be a single article by myself, and it's the second number too!"

*

Madame Félix de Vandenesse went three times to the Bois de Boulogne without seeing Raoul there, and returned home in despair and sorely troubled. Nathan did not choose to make his appearance there otherwise than with all the splendor of a prince of the press. He spent the whole week in finding two horses and a suitable cabriolet and tiger, in convincing his partners of the necessity of saving such valuable time as his, and in having his equipage charged to the general expenses of the newspaper. His partners, Massol and Du Tillet, acceded to his request so readily that he thought they were the best fellows in the world. Without this assistance, life would have been impossible to Raoul; it was becoming so hard a life, however, although with an admixture of the most delectable pleasures of ideal love, that many people, even those endowed with the strongest constitutions, would have been unable to stand up under such dissipation.

A vehement and requited passion occupies much space in an ordinary existence; but when its object is a woman in Madame de Vandenesse's position, it may be expected to exhaust the vitality of a man with so many demands upon his time as Raoul. These are the duties which his passion placed before all others. He must appear on horseback in

the Bois de Boulogne almost every day between two and three o'clock, in the guise of a gentleman of leisure. There he would learn at whose house or at which theatre he could see Madame de Vandenesse again in the evening. He never left the salons until toward midnight after pouncing upon a word or two long awaited, a few morsels of tenderness bestowed by stealth under the table, between two doors or as she entered her carriage. Most of the time, Marie, who had launched him in the first society, procured invitations for him to dine at certain houses at which she was a frequent guest. Was it not a simple matter? Raoul, dominated by his passion, was restrained by pride from speaking of his work. He was compelled to obey the most capricious behests of this innocent sovereign, and at the same time to follow the parliamentary debates and the torrent of politics, keep an eye on the management of the newspaper, and produce two plays, the receipts from which were indispensable to him. Madame de Vandenesse had but to pout when he tried to escape attendance at a ball, a concert or a drive, and he at once sacrificed his interests to her good pleasure. When he quitted the gay world between one and two o'clock in the morning, he would return home to work until eight or nine, sleep almost none at all, and then be on his feet again to decide upon the opinions to be espoused by the newspaper in concert with the influential men upon whom its existence depended, and to discuss the innumerable details of the management. In these

days, journalism has a hand in everything, manufactures, public and private concerns, new enterprises, the productions of literary men and everything that touches their self-esteem. When Nathan had been running all day from his editorial office to the theatre, from the theatre to the Chamber, from the Chamber to some of his creditors, tired out and worried as he was, he must appear before Marie with tranquil, blissful mien, gallop up to her door with the serenity of a man who has no cares and knows no weariness, save that of happiness. When, as his reward for all this unsuspected devotion, he received nothing more than the sweetest of words, the most touching assurances of everlasting attachment, a warm pressure of the hand, stolen during a few seconds of solitude, a passionate word or two in exchange for his own, he felt that he was cheating himself by leaving her in ignorance of the enormous price he was paying for what our fathers would have called these *trifling testimonials.*

The opportunity for an explanation was not long in coming. One lovely day in April, the countess accepted Nathan's arm in an out-of-the-way corner of the Bois de Boulogne; she had a crow to pluck with him—one of those charming little quarrels about nothing, out of which women can build mountains. Instead of greeting him with a smile upon her lips, her face radiant with happiness, her eyes lighted up with some ingenious, joyous thought, she was grave and serious.

"What is wrong with you?" said Nathan.

"Don't concern yourself about such trifles," said she; "you must know that women are children."

"Have I offended you?"

"Should I be here?"

"But you don't smile at me, you don't seem glad to see me."

"I have a fit of the sulks, haven't I?" said she, looking at him with the resigned air which women adopt when they wish to pose as victims.

Nathan walked forward a few steps with a feeling of apprehension that saddened him and made his heart sick.

"It must be," he said after a pause, "some trivial fright, one of the vague suspicions that you place above the greatest concerns of life; you have the power to change the world's course with a feather or a straw!"

"Sarcasm, eh?—I expected it," said she, hanging her head.

"Marie, my angel, don't you see that I said that to tear your secret from you?"

"My secret will still be a secret even after you have been entrusted with it."

"Well, tell me—"

"I am not loved," she retorted, glancing at him out of the corner of her eye with the cunning, mischievous expression with which women cross-examine the men they wish to torture.

"Not loved?"—cried Nathan.

"No, you have too many irons in the fire. Where am I in the midst of all the excitement? neglected

at every turn. Yesterday I came to the Bois and waited for you—"

"But—"

"I wore a new dress for your benefit, and you didn't come; where were you—"

"But—"

"I had no idea. I went to Madame d'Espard's and I didn't find you there."

"But—"

"In the evening, at the opera, I never took my eyes off the balcony, every time the door opened my heart beat as if it would burst."

"But—"

"What an evening! You have no conception of these tempests in the heart."

"But—"

"Such emotion wears one's life away—"

"But—"

"Well?" said she.

"True, it does wear one's life out," said Nathan, "and before many months you will have consumed mine. Your insane reproaches extort my secret from me too—You say I don't love you?—Ah! I love you too well."

He painted his position in vivid colors, told her of his vigils, enumerated his engagements at stated hours, and explained the necessity of success, the insatiable demands of a newspaper which is called upon to pass judgment, before all others, upon current events and to make no mistake under pain of losing its power, and the innumerable rapid studies

he was required to make upon the questions which succeeded each other as swiftly as clouds in that consuming age.

Raoul was put in the wrong in a moment. As the Marquise d'Espard had told him, nothing is more artless than a first love. He soon found that the countess was guilty of loving too much. A loving woman responds to everything with a confession, an endearment or a caress. The countess, when this prodigious life was unrolled before her, was overwhelmed with admiration. She had made Nathan a very great man in her thoughts, she found him sublime. She accused herself of loving too much, begged him to come at his own time; she smoothed his ambitious labors by raising her eyes to heaven. She would wait! Thenceforth she would sacrifice her own pleasures. Although her desire was to be only a stepping-stone, she was an obstacle!—she wept with despair.

"Women," she said with tears in her eyes, "can do nothing but love, while men have a thousand things to occupy them; we can only think and pray and adore."

Such a wealth of love deserved a reward. She looked around, like the nightingale as he flies down from his branch to a spring, to see if they were alone in the solitude, if no spy were hidden in the silence; then she raised her head to Raoul, who bent his to meet it; she allowed him to take a kiss, the first, the only one she was destined to bestow

clandestinely, and she was happier at that moment than she had been for five years.

Raoul felt that all his labors were rewarded. They walked along together on the road from Auteuil to Boulogne, without any definite idea where they were going; they were obliged at last to return to their carriages, walking with the regular, rhythmical step which lovers know. Raoul had confidence in that kiss, bestowed with the modest willingness that sanctity of sentiment imparts. All the harm came from the world, and not from this woman who was so entirely his. Raoul no longer regretted the trials of his tempestuous life, which Marie was certain to forget in the heat of her first desire, like all women who are not constant witnesses of the terrible struggles of such exceptional lives. Under the sway of the grateful admiration, characteristic of a woman's love, Marie trod the fine sand of a bypath with a quick, firm step, saying, as did Raoul, very few words, but heartfelt and full of meaning.

The sky was without a cloud, the great trees were budding, and here and there a speck of green gave life to their myriads of slender brown twigs. The shrubs, the birches, the willows, the poplars were putting forth their first tender, still diaphanous shoots. Such harmony no soul can resist. Love interpreted nature to the countess, as it had interpreted society to her.

"I wish that you had never loved anyone but me!" said she.

"Your wish is gratified," Raoul replied. "We have taught each other what true love is."

He spoke the truth. In posing as a pure man before this youthful heart, Raoul had resort to high-flown phrases of lofty sentiment. At first, purely speculative and self-seeking, his passion had become sincere. He began by lying, he ended by speaking the truth.

There is, however, in every writer a sentiment, difficult to restrain, that leads him to admire what is morally beautiful. In fine, by dint of making sacrifices, a man becomes interested in the person who demands them. Women of the world have an instinctive perception of this truth, just as courtesans have; indeed it may be that they put it in practice without knowing it. So it was that the countess, after her first burst of gratitude and surprise, was enraptured to find that she had inspired so many sacrifices, had caused him to overcome so many obstacles. She was beloved by a man who was worthy of her. Raoul did not know all that his false grandeur required of him; for women do not allow their lovers to descend from their pedestals. A god can not be pardoned for the slightest baseness. Marie did not know the keyword of the enigma Raoul gave his friends at the supper-party at Véry's. This low-born writer's struggle for existence had occupied the first ten years of his youth; he longed to be beloved by one of the queens of the world of fashion. Vanity, without which love is very weak, says Chamfort, kept

his passion alight and added fuel to it from day to day.

"Can you swear to me that you do not and never will belong to any other woman?" said Marie.

"There would be no more time in my life than there is room in my heart for another woman," he replied, believing that he was telling the truth, so great was his contempt for Florine.

"I believe you," said she.

When they reached the avenue where the carriages were waiting, Marie dropped Nathan's arm, and he assumed a respectful attitude as if he had just met her; he escorted her to her carriage, hat in hand, then followed her along Charles X. Avenue, breathing the dust raised by her horses and gazing at her feathers, drooping like the weeping willow, as the wind blew them about.

Notwithstanding Marie's noble self-denial, Raoul, inflamed by his passion, went wherever she was; he adored the reproachful yet happy expression the countess assumed in an ineffectual attempt to scold him, when she saw him wasting the time that was so valuable to him. Marie undertook the direction of his labors, gave him explicit orders as to the employment of his time, and remained at home in order to deprive him of all excuse for dissipation. She read his paper every morning and became the herald of the renown of Étienne Lousteau the feuilletonist, whom she thought delightful, of Félicien Vernou, Claude Vignon and all the editors. She advised Raoul to do justice to De Marsay when he died, and

read with rapture the noble and eloquent eulogy he wrote of the dead minister, although he blamed his machiavelism and hatred for the masses. Naturally she was present, in a front seat at the Gymnase, at the first performance of the play upon which Nathan relied to support him in his undertaking, and which seemed to make a tremendous hit. She was deceived by the hired applause.

"You haven't said farewell to the Italiens, have you?" said Lady Dudley, to whose house she went after the performance.

"No, I have been to the Gymnase. It was the first night of a new play."

"I can't endure vaudevilles. I feel the same way about them that Louis XIV. felt about Tenier's pictures," said Lady Dudley.

"For my part," said Madame d'Espard, "I think that our authors are making progress. The vaudevilles of to-day are delightful comedies, bubbling over with wit, and they demand first-rate talent; I enjoy them very much."

"The actors are excellent, too," said Marie. "They acted extremely well at the Gymnase to-night; the play suited them, for the dialogue is very bright and clever."

"Like Beaumarchais," said Lady Dudley.

"Monsieur Nathan isn't a Molière yet; but—" said Madame d'Espard with a glance at the countess.

"He makes vaudevilles," said Madame Charles de Vandenesse.

"And unmakes ministries," added Madame de Manerville.

The countess said nothing; she tried to reply with some biting epigram; she felt that her heart was in a ferment of rage; she could find nothing better to say than:

"He will make them perhaps."

All the women exchanged mysterious glances of intelligence. When Marie de Vandenesse had taken her leave, Moina de Saint-Héren exclaimed:

"Why, she worships Nathan!"

"She makes no mystery of it," observed Madame d'Espard.

*

The month of May arrived and Vandenesse took his wife away to his estate in the country, where her only consolation was the receipt of passionate letters from Raoul, to whom she wrote every day.

The countess's absence might have saved him from the chasm he had stepped into, if Florine had been with him; but he was alone in the midst of friends who became his secret enemies as soon as he exhibited a purpose to domineer over them. His collaborators hated him for the moment, ready to hold out a helping hand and console him if he failed; ready to fall down and fawn upon him if he succeeded. So goes the literary world. There, no man loves anybody save his inferiors. Every man is the foe of anyone who seeks to rise. This general jealousy increases tenfold the opportunities of mediocre men who arouse neither envy nor suspicion, but burrow along like moles, and, however stupid they may be, find themselves gazetted in the *Moniteur* for three or four lucrative places, while the men of talent are still fighting at the door to prevent one another from going in.

The underground hostility of these pretended friends, whom Florine would have detected with the innate genius of the courtesan for putting her hand upon the truth among a thousand hypotheses, was not the greatest danger by which Raoul was

threatened. His two associates, Massol the advocate and Du Tillet the banker, had conceived the scheme of harnessing his ardor to the chariot in which they were showing themselves off, intending to eject him as soon as he ceased to be in a condition to carry on the newspaper, or to deprive him of that great power as soon as they wanted to make use of it. In their eyes, Nathan stood for a certain sum of money to be consumed, a literary force as effective as ten pens to be employed. Massol, one of those advocates who mistake the faculty of speaking at indefinite length for eloquence, who possess the secret of wearying their hearers whatever they may say, the pest of assemblies where they cheapen everything, and who are determined to become personages at any price, no longer aimed at being keeper of the seals; he had seen five or six of them succeed one another in four years, and had taken a dislike to the gown. He desired, even as he desired money in his purse, a chair in the department of Public Instruction, a seat at the Council of State, the whole seasoned by the Cross of the Legion of Honor. Du Tillet and Baron de Nucingen had guaranteed the Cross and his appointment as master of requests if he would enter into their plans; he deemed them better able to fulfill their promises than Nathan, and he obeyed them blindly. The better to pull the wool over Raoul's eyes they allowed him to manage the paper without interference. Du Tillet used it only to forward his stock-jobbing interests, which Raoul understood

nothing about; but he had already given Rastignac to understand through Baron de Nucingen that the sheet would be tacitly indulgent to the government, on the single condition that support should be given his candidacy for the succession to Monsieur de Nucingen, soon to be made a peer of France, who sat in the Chamber for a sort of rotten borough with very few electors, where the paper was sent *gratis* in profusion.

Thus Raoul was fooled by the banker and the advocate, who took infinite delight in seeing him on his throne at the office of the newspaper, making the most of all his chances, reaping all the fruits of selfishness or of other qualities. Nathan was delighted with them, and, as at the time of his request for funds with which to stock his stable, thought them the best fellows in the world; he believed that he was fooling them.

Men of imagination to whom hope is the essence of life, are never willing to say to themselves that the most perilous moment in matters of business, is that when everything seems to be going on in accordance with their wishes. It was a moment of triumph by which Nathan profited, for he made his appearance in the political and financial world: Du Tillet presented him at Nucingen's house. Madame de Nucingen welcomed Raoul with warmth, less on his own account than on Madame de Vandenesse's; but when she let drop a word or two concerning the countess, he thought that he was wonderfully clever to use Florine as a screen; he descanted with

fatuous generosity upon his relations with the actress, which it was impossible for him to break. Does a man abandon certain happiness for the coquetries of the Faubourg Saint-Germain?

Nathan, hoodwinked by Nucingen and Rastignac, by Du Tillet and Blondet, pompously accorded his support to the doctrinaires in the formation of one of their ephemeral cabinets. Then, in order to go into business with clean hands, he declined, with a great show of disdain, to accept a share in certain enterprises that were floated with the assistance of his paper,—a man who did not hesitate to compromise his friends and to deal in a way that showed no nice sense of honor with certain manufacturing concerns at divers critical moments! Such contrasts, engendered by vanity or by ambition, are to be found in many similar lives. The outer cloak must be made to appear magnificent to the public, so a man borrows cloth from his friends to cover the holes. Nevertheless, two months after the countess's departure, Raoul had a disagreeable quarter of an hour which caused him some anxiety in the midst of his triumph. Du Tillet had advanced a hundred thousand francs. The money furnished by Florine, a third of the original capital, had been eaten up by the public charges and the enormous expenses attending the first establishment of the paper. It was necessary to provide for the future. The banker accommodated the editor by taking his notes of hand at four months for fifty thousand francs. Thus Du Tillet held Raoul by the halter

of the note of hand. This supplementary contribution supplied the paper with funds for six months. In the eyes of some writers, six months are an eternity. Moreover, by ingenious advertising, by employing a number of agents, and by offering illusory advantages to subscribers, they had scraped together two thousand of them. This partial success encouraged Raoul to throw banknotes into the furnace. Given a little more talent, let a political prosecution be undertaken against them, or something that might pass for persecution, and Raoul would become one of the modern *condottieri* whose ink is more effective to-day than the gunpowder of former days.

Unfortunately this arrangement was made before Florine returned with about fifty thousand francs. Instead of creating a reserve fund, Raoul, sure of success, because he saw that success was necessary, humiliated at having already accepted money from the actress, dazzled by the insidious laudation of his flatterers, and feeling in his heart that his love had ennobled him, deceived Florine as to his position and forced her to use the money in refurnishing her house. Under the existing circumstances it was essential to make a magnificent show. The actress, who did not need to be urged, burdened herself with debts to the amount of thirty thousand francs. She had a charming house all to herself, on Rue Pigalle, where all her former coterie reassembled. The house of a damsel in Florine's position was neutral ground, very favorable for the ambitious politicians,

who did as Louis XIV. did in Holland: made treaties under Raoul's roof without Raoul.

Nathan had held in reserve for Florine's reappearance, a play in which the principal part was admirably suited to her abilities. This vaudeville-drama was to be Raoul's farewell to the stage. The newspapers, who incurred no expense by reason of this act of complaisance for Raoul, premeditated such an ovation to Florine that the Comédie-Française talked about offering her an engagement. The critics declared that Florine was the heir of Mademoiselle Mars. This triumph turned the actress's head to a sufficient extent to interfere with her study of the course Nathan was pursuing; she was living in a whirl of fêtes and banquets. Queen of a court filled with a pressing throng of petitioners, one for his book, another for his play, another for his ballet-dancer, another for his theatre, another for his enterprise, another for an article, she abandoned herself to all the delights of the power of the press, seeing therein the dawn of ministerial influence. To judge from what was said by those who frequented her salon, Nathan was a great politician. Nathan had shown good judgment in his venture, he would be a deputy, and certainly a minister before long, like so many others before him.

Actresses rarely say no to anyone who flatters them. Florine was credited with too much talent in the *feuilleton* to distrust the paper and those who conducted it. She knew too little of the mechanism

of the press to trouble herself about the means. Girls of Florine's stamp never look at anything but results. As for Nathan, he believed, from that time on, that at the next session he would take a hand in affairs, with two former journalists, one of whom, then a minister, was trying to turn out his colleagues in order to strengthen himself.

Nathan was delighted to see Florine again after her six months' absence, and nonchalantly fell back into his old ways. The coarse woof of his life he secretly embellished with the loveliest flowers of his ideal passion, and with the pleasure Florine strewed thereon. His letters to Marie were masterpieces of love, grace and style. Nathan made her the light of his life, he undertook nothing without consulting his good genius. In despair at being on the popular side, there were moments when he longed to espouse the cause of the aristocracy; but, accustomed though he was to feats of agility, it seemed to him absolutely impossible to leap from the Left to the Right; it was easier to become a minister. Marie's precious letters were deposited in one of the portfolios with secret compartments put on the market by Huret or Fichet, the two inventors who were carrying on a war of advertisements and placards in Paris as to which could make the safest and most reliable locks. This portfolio was kept in Florine's new boudoir, where Raoul worked. No one is so easy to deceive as a woman to whom one is accustomed to tell everything; she is suspicious of nothing, because she thinks that

she sees and knows everything. Moreover, since her return the actress was a witness of Raoul's whole life, and could see nothing irregular in it. She would never have imagined that the portfolio, which she had hardly noticed, and which was kept locked without any affectation of mystery, contained treasures of love, a rival's letters, which, at Raoul's request, the countess directed to the office of the paper.

Nathan then seemed to occupy an extremely brilliant position. He had many friends. Two plays written in collaboration, which had just been successful, provided funds to gratify his luxurious tastes and banished all anxiety for the future. Nor did he worry at all concerning his debt to his friend Du Tillet.

"How can a man distrust a friend?" he would say, when Blondet, as sometimes happened, expressed some apprehension, induced by his habit of analyzing everything.

"But we have no need to distrust even our enemies," said Florine.

Nathan defended Du Tillet. Du Tillet was the kindest, the most obliging, the most upright of men. This sort of rope-walker's existence without a balancing-pole would have horrified anyone, even the most indifferent, if he could have penetrated the mystery; but Du Tillet contemplated it with the stoicism and dry eye of a parvenu. There was a sort of fiendish mockery in the friendly good-humor of his treatment of Nathan. One day he shook

hands with him as they left Florine's house together and watched him enter his cabriolet.

"That fellow goes to the Bois de Boulogne in magnificent style," he said to Lousteau, the envious man *par excellence*, "and in six months' time perhaps he'll be at Clichy."

"He? Never!" cried Lousteau; "Florine's on hand."

"How do you know, my boy, that he'll keep her? As for you, you're worth a thousand of him, and you'll certainly be our editor-in-chief six months from now."

*

In October, the notes of hand fell due; Du Tillet obligingly renewed them, but for two months only, and increased in amount by the discount and a new loan. Sure of victory, Raoul drained the very springs dry. Madame Félix de Vandenesse was to return in a few days, a month earlier than usual, drawn back to Paris by a frenzied longing to see Nathan, who did not choose to be at the mercy of a lack of money when he resumed his militant life.

Correspondence, in which the pen is always bolder than the tongue, in which the thought, clothed in its flowers, touches upon every subject and can say what it will, had brought the countess to the highest pitch of exaltation; she saw in Raoul one of the most transcendent geniuses of the age, an exquisite, misunderstood heart, without stain and worthy of adoration; she saw him fearlessly putting forth his hand to stay the prodigality of the ruling powers. Soon that voice, so sweet in love, would thunder from the tribune. Marie's life ran in interlaced circles like those of a sphere, at whose centre is the world. With no inclination for the tranquil pleasures of home, she welcomed the excitement of this tempestuous life, communicated by a clever, loving pen; she kissed the letters penned amid the smoke of battles of the press, in moments stolen from his

hours of study; she was conscious of their value; she was sure that she filled his whole heart, that she had no rivals save glory and ambition; she found means in her solitude to exert all her strength, she was happy that she had chosen well: Nathan was an angel.

Fortunately her absence in the country and the obstacles that existed between Raoul and herself had silenced the slanderous tongues of the world. So during the last days of autumn, they resumed their drives in the Bois de Boulogne; they could meet nowhere else until the salons were once more thrown open. Raoul was able to enjoy more at ease the pure, exquisite delights of his ideal life and conceal it from Florine: he worked a little less as matters were running smoothly at the newspaper office and each editor knew what he had to do. He involuntarily made comparisons, always to the advantage of the actress, and yet the countess lost nothing in his sight.

Overspent anew by the manœuvres which his passion of head and heart for a woman at the top of the social ladder compelled him to perform, Raoul put forth superhuman strength in order to be in three places at once: in society, at his office and in the wings. At the time when Florine, who was grateful to him for everything, who almost shared his labors and his anxiety, was flitting in and out, pouring out genuine happiness upon him in streams, without high-flown phrases, without any accompaniment of remorse, the countess, with her insatiable

eyes and her chaste corsage, forgot his gigantic labors and the pains he often took to see her for an instant. Instead of domineering over him, Florine allowed him to take her up and put her down and take her up again like a cat that falls upon its feet and shakes its ears. Such easy-going morals are in admirable accord with the inclinations of men who live by their thoughts, and any artist would have made the most of them, as Nathan did, without abandoning the pursuit of his beautiful ideal love, that noble passion which fascinated his poetic instincts, his secret dreams of grandeur, his social vanity. Fully realizing the crash that would follow any indiscretion, he would say to himself: "Neither the countess nor Florine will ever know anything about it!" They were so far removed from each other!

With the beginning of winter, Raoul reappeared in society at his apogee: he was almost a personage. Rastignac, who had fallen with the ministry when it went to pieces at De Marsay's death, leaned upon Raoul and bolstered him up by his laudation. Madame de Vandenesse thereupon determined to find out if her husband had changed his opinion with regard to him, a year having elapsed. So she questioned him anew, thinking to be revenged on him in brilliant style—a thing that all women, even the noblest, the least worldly, thoroughly enjoy; for it would be perfectly safe to wager that the angels do not lay aside their self-esteem when they gather about the Holy of Holies.

"The only thing he lacked was to be the dupe of schemers," the count replied.

Félix, whose experience of the world and of politics made him very clear-sighted, had fathomed Raoul's position. He calmly explained to his wife that Fieschi's exploit had resulted in attaching many lukewarm men to the interests threatened in the person of King Louis-Philippe. Newspapers, whose colors were not sharply defined, would lose subscribers, for journalism was going to be simplified with politics. If Nathan had put his fortune into his newspaper, he would soon come to the end of his rope. This opinion was so clear and so reasonable, although expressed in few words as an off-hand answer to a question in which he took no interest, by a man who was a shrewd calculator of the chances of all parties, that it alarmed Madame de Vandenesse.

"Are you so deeply interested in him?" Félix asked his wife.

"Only as a man whose wit amuses me and whom I like to talk with."

This reply was made in so perfectly natural a tone that the count suspected nothing.

The next day at four o'clock, at Madame d'Espard's, Marie and Raoul had a long, whispered conversation. The countess expressed fears which Raoul dissipated, only too happy to crush Félix's conjugal grandeur with epigrams. He proceeded to take his revenge. He described the count as a man of small mind and behind the times, who would

measure the Revolution of July with the yardstick of the Restoration, who refused to recognize the triumph of the middle-class, the new force in society, and a genuine force whether temporary or lasting. Great noblemen were no longer possible, the reign of actual superiority had arrived. Instead of taking to heart the indirect, impartial judgment of an experienced politician dispassionately replying to questions, Raoul strutted about on stilts and draped himself in the purple robes of his success. What woman is there who has not more faith in her lover than in her husband? So Madame de Vandenesse, relieved of her apprehensions, entered upon the life of repressed vexations, of trifling stolen pleasures, of clandestine pressures of the hand, her sustenance of the preceding winter,—a life which ends in leading a woman beyond bounds when the man she loves has some resolution and is impatient of obstacles.

Luckily for her, Raoul, appeased by Florine, was not dangerous. Moreover, he was bound hand and foot by important interests which made it impossible for him to take advantage of his good fortune. Nevertheless, any sudden disaster befalling him, fresh obstacles, or a fit of impatience might hurry the countess into an abyss. Raoul caught a glimpse of such a tendency on her part, when Du Tillet, toward the end of December, called for payment of his notes. The rich banker, who said that he was pressed for money, advised Raoul to borrow the money for a fortnight from a usurer, Gigonnet, for

instance, the providence at twenty-five per cent of all youths in straitened circumstances. In a few days, the paper would effect its grand January renewals, there would be money in the cash-box, and then Du Tillet would see. Indeed, why should not Nathan write a play? From sheer pride, Nathan was determined to pay the notes at any price. Du Tillet gave him a letter to the usurer, whereupon Gigonnet advanced the money on notes of hand drawn at twenty days. Instead of seeking for an explanation of his readiness to oblige, Raoul was angry with himself for not asking for more. Many men of the most eminent intellectual powers act in the same way; they see food for jesting in matters of serious importance; they seem to keep their mind in reserve for their works, and make no use of it in everyday life for fear of cheapening it.

Raoul described his morning's experience to Florine and Blondet; he sketched Gigonnet for them to the life, his little *papier de Réveillon*, his staircase, his asthmatic bell and the stag's foot bell-pull, his little worn-out straw pallet, his hearth, where there was no more fire than in his eyes; he made them laugh heartily over this new *uncle* of his; they were not disturbed at the thought of Du Tillet in need of money or of a usurer so ready to open his cash-box. It was all caprice!

"He only charged you fifteen per cent," said Blondet, "and you ought to be very grateful to him. At twenty-five per cent we stop bowing to

them; usury begins at fifty per cent: at that figure we despise them."

"Despise them!" said Florine. "Who is there among your friends who would loan you money at that rate without posing as your benefactor?"

"She is right, I am lucky not to owe Du Tillet anything any more," said Raoul.

Why is it that men who are accustomed to look thoroughly into everything are so deficient in penetration in their own private affairs? Perhaps it is that the mind can not be completely equipped in every direction, perhaps artists live too entirely in the present to study the future, perhaps they keep their eyes too closely upon trivial things to see a trap, and believe that no one dares play a trick on them.

The future was not slow in arriving. Twenty days later, the notes were protested; but at the Tribunal de Commerce, Florine demanded and obtained twenty-five days in which to provide for their payment. Raoul looked about to see where he stood, and requested an accounting; the result was that the receipts of the newspaper covered two-thirds of the outgo, and that the subscription list was dwindling. The great man became anxious and gloomy, but only to Florine, to whom he confided his troubles. Florine advised him to realize on the plays he was writing, by selling them outright, and to assign his receipts from his other plays. In this way, he procured twenty thousand francs and reduced his debt to forty thousand.

On February tenth, the twenty-five days expired. Du Tillet, who did not choose to have Nathan for a rival in the electoral college at which he proposed to offer himself as a candidate, leaving to Massol another college that was at the disposal of the ministry, ordered Gigonnet to pursue him to the last ditch. A man imprisoned for debt can not offer himself as a candidate for the Chamber. The debtor's prison at Clichy was destined to swallow the future minister. Florine herself was in constant communication with the bailiffs by reason of her personal debts; and in this crisis she had no other resource than the *Myself!* of Medea, for her furniture was seized. The ambitious creature heard the cracking sounds of approaching destruction in all parts of his newly-erected structure, built with no foundation. He knew that he lacked the necessary strength to carry on so vast an undertaking, much less was he capable of beginning it anew; so he must perish in the ruins of his dream. His love for the countess still afforded him some few gleams of life; it gave animation to his mask, but within, hope was dead. He did not suspect Du Tillet, he saw nobody's hand but the usurer's. Rastignac, Blondet, Lousteau, Vernou, Finot, Massol were careful not to enlighten a man who could on occasion exhibit such perilous activity. Rastignac, who wanted to return to power, made common cause with Nucingen and Du Tillet. The others experienced infinite delight in contemplating the death-agony of one of their equals, guilty of having

attempted to be their master. Not one of them would have said a word to Florine; on the other hand, they praised Raoul to her.

"Nathan's shoulders were broad enough to hold up the world, he would get out of it, and everything would go on all right!"

"We got two new subscribers yesterday," said Blondet gravely; "Raoul will be a deputy. As soon as the budget is voted, the order for dissolution will appear."

As Nathan had been sued, he could no longer expect assistance from usurers. As Florine's furniture had been seized, she had nothing to look to, save the chance of inspiring a passion in some idiot, who never turns up at the proper time. Nathan's friends were all men without money or credit. An arrest would destroy his hopes of political advancement. To cap the climax of his woes, he was pledged to perform a vast amount of work for which he had been paid in advance; he could see no bottom to the abyss of misery in which he was soon to be plunged. In presence of so many threatened disasters, his audacity deserted him. Would the Comtesse de Vandenesse cleave to him, would she fly with him? Women are never impelled to take that step unless by absolute, undivided love, and their passion had not knitted them together by the mysterious ties of happpiness. But even if the countess should go abroad with him, she would be without means, stripped bare of all her property, and would be an additional burden.

A second-rate mind, a vain man like Nathan, was certain to see and he did thereupon see in suicide the blade that would cut these Gordian knots. The idea of falling from his pedestal in the sight of the social circle into which he had made his way and which he had sought to master, of leaving the countess there, triumphant, and of becoming once more a base foot-soldier, was not to be endured. Folly danced and jingled her bells at the door of the imaginary palace in which the poet dwelt. In his extremity, Nathan awaited a possible stroke of luck and did not propose to kill himself until the last moment.

During the last days, while the judgment was being certified and the petition for arrest and order thereon issued, Raoul's face wore, wherever he went, the ominously indifferent expression which keen observers have noticed in all men predisposed to suicide, or who are contemplating it. The ghastly ideas they are caressing cause grayish clouds to settle upon their brow; their smile has an indefinable suggestion of fatality; their movements are solemn. The wretched creatures seem to be determined to consume the gilded fruit of life to the core; their eyes search the heart on every occasion; they hear their funeral knell in the air and are unmindful of their surroundings.

Marie noticed these alarming symptoms one evening at Lady Dudley's; Raoul had remained behind, alone, upon a divan in the boudoir, while everybody was talking in the salon; the countess

went to the door, he did not raise his head; he heard neither her breath nor the rustling of her silk dress; he was staring at a flower in the carpet with eyes dazed with suffering; he preferred death to abdication. Everybody has not Saint-Helena for a pedestal. Moreover, suicide was king in Paris at this time; is it not always the last word of societies wavering in their faith? Raoul had made up his mind to die. Despair is proportioned to the hopes that it succeeds, and Raoul's had no other issue than the tomb.

"What's the matter?" said Marie, flying to his side.

"Nothing," he replied.

There is a way of saying that word *nothing*, between lovers, that means just the opposite. Marie shrugged her shoulders.

"You're a perfect child!" said she. "Has any thing gone wrong with you?"

"Not with me. However, you'll know it all too soon, Marie," he replied, affectionately.

"What were you thinking about when I came in?" she demanded authoritatively.

"Do you want to know the truth?"

She nodded.

"I was thinking of you; I was saying to myself that many men in my place would have insisted upon being loved unreservedly; I am, am I not?"

"Yes," she said.

"And I leave you pure and with no remorse," continued Raoul, putting his arm around her and

drawing her to him to kiss her forehead, at the risk of being surprised. "I might drag you into the pit, but you will remain in all your glory without a stain, on the brink. There is one thought that troubles me, however—"

"What is it?"

"You will despise me?"

She smiled superbly.

"Yes, you will never believe in the holiness of my love; and then people will abuse me, I know. Women do not imagine that from the depths of our slime we raise our eyes to heaven, there to worship with our whole heart, a Marie. They mix up this sanctified love with paltry questions, they do not understand that men of lofty intelligence and poetic temperament can detach their minds from mere enjoyment in order to keep it in reserve, to worship at some cherished altar. But, Marie, the worship of the ideal is more fervent with us than with you: we find it in the woman who does not look for it in us."

"Why this deliverance?" said she jestingly, like a woman who was sure of herself.

"I am leaving France; to-morrow you will learn why and how, by a letter that my valet will bring you. Adieu, Marie!"

He rushed from the room after straining the countess to his heart in a fierce embrace, and left her stupefied with grief.

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"Pray, what has happened, my dear," said the Marquise d'Espard, entering the room in search of the countess; "what did Monsieur Nathan say to you? He left us with a most melodramatic air. You are too reasonable, perhaps, or too unreasonable."

The countess took Madame d'Espard's arm and returned to the salon, taking her departure a few moments later.

"Perhaps she's going to her first rendezvous," suggested Lady Dudley to the marchioness.

"I will find out," replied Madame d'Espard; and she too left the house and followed the countess's carriage.

But Madame de Vandenesse's coupé went in the direction of Faubourg Saint-Honoré. When Madame d'Espard entered her own courtyard, she saw the Comtesse Félix driving on through the faubourg on her way to Rue du Rocher.

Marie went to bed, but was unable to sleep, and passed the night reading a voyage to the North Pole without understanding a word of it. At half-past eight she received a letter from Raoul and hurriedly tore it open. The letter began with these classic words:

"My dearest love, when you receive this letter, I shall be no more—"

She did not finish, but crumpled the paper nervously in her hand, rang for her maid, hastily donned a *peignoir*, thrust her feet into the first shoes that came to hand, wrapped herself in a shawl and put on a hat; then she went out, bidding her maid tell the count that she had gone to see her sister, Madame du Tillet.

"Where did you leave your master?" she asked Raoul's servant.

"At the office of his newspaper."

"Let us go there," she said.

To the great astonishment of her servants, she left the house on foot, before nine o'clock, evidently under the influence of intense excitement. Luckily for her, the maid informed the count that madame had just received a letter from Madame du Tillet which gave her a terrible shock, and that she had hurried off to her sister's with the servant who brought her the letter. Vandenesse awaited his wife's return to find out what it all meant.

The countess entered a cab and was driven rapidly to the office of the newspaper. At that hour, the huge rooms occupied by the paper, in an old mansion on Rue Feydeau, were deserted; nobody was to be found but an office-boy, who was greatly astonished to see a pretty young woman rushing wildly through the rooms, asking where Monsieur Nathan was.

"He's at Mademoiselle Florine's, of course," he replied, taking the countess for a jealous rival who was intending to make a scene.

"Where does he work when he is here?" she asked.

"In an office, the key of which he carries in his pocket."

"I wish to go there."

The boy led her to a small, dark room looking on a rear courtyard, formerly a dressing-room attached to a large bedroom, the alcove of which had not been destroyed. The office was at right angles with the bedroom. By opening the window of the latter, the countess could look through the office window and see what was taking place there: Nathan was sitting in the armchair of the editor-in-chief, writhing in the death-agony.

"Break in the door and say nothing! I will buy your silence," she said. "Don't you see that Monsieur Nathan is dying?"

The boy ran to the printing-office for an iron form with which to break in the door. Raoul was dying of suffocation, like a common seamstress, through the medium of a chafing-dish of charcoal. He had just finished a letter to Blondet in which he begged him to give it out that his suicide was a stroke of apoplexy. The countess arrived in time; she ordered Raoul to be carried out to the cab, and having no idea where to take him to procure proper care, she drove to a hotel, took a room there and sent the office-boy for a doctor.

In a few hours, Raoul was out of danger; but the countess did not leave his bedside until she had obtained from him a general confession. After the

ambitious castaway had poured into her heart the pitiable elegiacs of his sorrow, she returned home a prey to all the torturing thoughts that had besieged Raoul the night before.

"I will arrange everything," she had said to him, to induce him to live.

"Well, what's the matter with your sister?" Félix asked his wife when she joined him. "There's a tremendous change in you, I should say."

"It's a terrible story and I must keep it absolutely secret," she replied, summoning all her strength in order to appear calm.

In order to be alone and to think at her ease, she went in the evening to the Italiens, and thence to pour out her heart into Madame du Tillet's, to whom she described the scene of the morning, asking her advice and assistance. Neither of them knew that Du Tillet had kindled the fire in the vulgar chafing-dish, the sight of which had terrified Comtesse Félix de Vandenesse.

"He has nobody but me in the world," said Marie to her sister, "and I'll not fail him."

That declaration contains the secret of all women's hearts: they are heroic when they are certain that they are all the world to a great man of irreproachable character.

Du Tillet had heard the story, more or less probable, of his sister-in-law's passion for Nathan; but he was one of those who denied it or deemed it incompatible with the liaison between Raoul and Florine. The actress would be sure to drive away

the countess, or vice versa. But when, upon returning home that evening, he found there his sister-in-law, in whose face he had noticed at the Italiens, abundant evidences of intense emotion, he guessed that Raoul had confided his plight to her; in that case the countess was in love with him and had come to ask Marie-Eugénie for the amount due Gigonnet. Madame du Tillet, who was unacquainted with the secret of what seemed supernatural penetration, exhibited such dismay that Du Tillet's suspicions changed to certainty. The banker believed that he could soon hold in his hand the thread of Nathan's intrigues.

No one knew the poor fellow lying in bed in a furnished hotel on Rue du Mail, under the name of the office-boy, to whom the countess had promised five hundred francs if he held his tongue touching the events of the night and morning. So François Quillet had taken the precaution to say to the concierge that Nathan had been taken sick as the result of overwork.

Du Tillet was not surprised that he did not find Nathan at the office. It was natural that the journalist should go into hiding to elude the people sent to arrest him. When the spies arrived to make inquiries, they learned that a lady had come in the morning and taken the editor-in-chief away. Two days passed before they discovered the number of the cab, questioned the driver, found and searched the hotel where the debtor was coming back to life. Thus the wise measures taken by Marie had procured Nathan a reprieve of three days.

Each of the two sisters passed a miserable night. Such a catastrophe casts the gleam of its charcoal over the whole life; it lights up the shoals and reefs, rather than the mountain-tops which have thus far engrossed the attention. Deeply impressed by the horrible spectacle of a young man dying in his chair, before his journal, writing down his last thoughts *à la Romaine*, poor Madame du Tillet could think of nothing but assisting him and restoring life to that heart in which her sister lived.

It is natural to the human mind to look to effects before analyzing causes. Eugénie upon reflection thought well of her plan of applying to Baronne Delphine de Nucingen, with whom she was to dine the next night, and she did not doubt that she should be successful. Madame du Tillet, great-hearted, as are all those who have not been crushed between the polished steel rollers of modern society, resolved to take everything upon herself.

The countess, happy in that she had already saved Nathan's life, passed the night inventing schemes to procure forty thousand francs. At such crises, women are sublime. Guided by sentiment, they arrive at combinations that would surprise thieves, business men and usurers, if those three classes of toilers, licensed or not, were ever surprised at anything. The countess thought she would sell her diamonds, and wear false ones. She decided to ask Vandenesse for the money for her sister, whom she had already compromised; but she had too much nobility of soul not to recoil from

dishonorable means; they were conceived only to be rejected. Vandenesse's money to Nathan! She jumped up in her bed, terrified at her own wickedness. Wear false diamonds! her husband would discover it sooner or later. She would go to the Rothschilds who had so much money and ask them for the amount she needed, to the Archbishop of Paris whose duty it was to succor the poor,—rushing from one religion to another, imploring help from all. She deplored the fact that her family was no longer in the government; the time had been when she could have borrowed the money on the outskirts of the throne. She thought of applying to her father. But the old magistrate had a horror of anything illegal; his children had learned at last how little he sympathized with the misfortunes of love; he would not allow them to be mentioned, he had become a misanthrope; he held every sort of intrigue in abomination. As for the Comtesse de Granville, she was living in retirement in Normandy, on one of her estates, ending her days between priests and bags of gold, cold to the last. Even if Marie had had time to reach Bayeux, would her mother give her so much money without knowing what use would be made of it? Would she imagine it was to pay debts? Yes, perhaps she would allow herself to be softened by her favorite. Well then, in case of failure, the countess would go to Normandy. The Comte de Granville would not refuse to furnish her with an excuse for the journey by sending her word of a fictitious serious

illness from which his wife was supposed to be suffering.

The lamentable spectacle that had horrified her in the morning, the care she had lavished upon Nathan, the hours passed at his bedside, his broken narratives, the death agony of a noble mind, the theft of genius arrested in its career by a commonplace, ignoble obstacle, everything crowded in upon her memory to stimulate her love. She reviewed her emotions and felt that she was even more captivated by misery than by grandeur. Would she have kissed that brow if it had worn the crown of success? No. To her mind, there was infinite nobleness in the last words Nathan had said to her in Lady Dudley's boudoir. What sanctity in that farewell! How noble to sacrifice happiness which would have become a means of torture to her! The countess had longed for emotion in her life; it abounded there, intense and cruel, but dear to her heart. She lived more completely by sorrow than by joy. With what ecstasy she said to herself: "I have saved him once, I will save him again!" She heard him crying: "Only the unfortunate know how far love can go!" when he felt her lips laid upon his forehead.

"Are you sick?" her husband asked her, when he went to her room to summon her to breakfast.

"I am horribly upset by the drama that's being enacted at my sister's," said she, without telling a falsehood.

"She has fallen into bad hands; it's a disgrace to

the family to have a Du Tillet in it, a base-born creature; if anything should happen to your sister she would get very little pity from him."

"What woman is satisfied with pity?" said the countess with a convulsive movement. "When you show no pity, your severity is a boon to us."

"I have known your nobleness of heart before to-day," said Félix, kissing his wife's hand, and deeply touched by this outburst of pride. "A woman who thinks like that doesn't need to be watched."

"Watched!" she repeated. "More shame that reacts upon you."

Félix smiled, but Marie blushed. When a woman is doing wrong in secret, she carries her woman's pride in public to the highest possible point. It is a little piece of dissimulation for which we must bear her no ill-will. Deception at such times abounds in dignity, if not in grandeur.

Marie wrote a line to Nathan, under the name of Monsieur Quillet, to tell him that all was going well, and sent it by a messenger to the Hotel du Mail. In the evening, at the Opéra, the countess reaped the benefit of her falsehoods, for it seemed perfectly natural to her husband that she should leave her box to call upon her sister. Félix waited until Du Tillet had left his wife alone before he gave her his arm to escort her thither. With what intense emotion Marie's heart was filled as she hurried through the corridor, entered her sister's box and took her seat there with a calm and serene expression before the

world of fashion which opened its eyes to see them together!

"Well?" said she.

Marie-Eugénie's face was an answer in itself; it fairly beamed with artless delight which many people attributed to satisfied vanity.

"He will be saved, my dear, but for three months only, and, in the meantime, we'll think up some way to assist him more permanently. Madame de Nucingen wants four notes for ten thousand francs each signed by anybody, no matter who it is, so that you shall not be compromised. She explained to me how they must be made; I didn't understand a word of it, but Monsieur Nathan will write them for you. I simply thought Schmucke, our old teacher, might help us out of the difficulty; he would sign them. If you send with the four notes a letter in which you guarantee their payment, Madame de Nucingen will let you have the money tomorrow. Do everything yourself, don't trust a soul. I don't think Schmucke will have any objections to make. To avoid suspicion on her part, I said that you wanted to oblige our old music-teacher, a German who has had bad luck. So I was justified in asking her to keep the matter a profound secret."

"You're as clever as an angel! If only the Baronne de Nucingen won't talk about it until she's given me the money!" said the countess, raising her eyes as if to implore God's assistance although she was at the Opéra.

"Schmucke lives on Rue de Nevers, that short

street on Quai Conti; don't forget, and go there yourself."

"Thank you, dear," said the countess pressing her sister's hand. "Ah! I would give ten years of my life—"

"To have in your old age—"

"To put an end to such agony forever," said the countess, smiling at the interruption.

All those who had their glasses fixed upon the sisters at that moment, would have believed, observing with admiration their ingenuous laughter, that they were discussing the most trivial matters; but one of those idlers who frequent the Opéra rather to scrutinize the toilettes and the faces than to enjoy the music, might have guessed the countess's secret, had he remarked the violent emotion that suddenly extinguished the joyous expression of those two lovely faces. Raoul, who had no occasion to fear the bailiffs at night, appeared, pale and wan, with restless eye and clouded brow, upon the step of the staircase where he usually stood. He looked for the countess in her box, saw that it was empty and hid his face in his hands, resting his elbow on the rail.

"As if she could be at the Opéra!" he thought.

"Pray look at us, you poor great man," said Madame du Tillet in an undertone.

As for Marie, at the risk of compromising herself, she fixed upon him that piercing, steadfast gaze, in which the will gushed from the eyes, as the waves of light gush from the sun, and which, according to

the mesmerists, penetrates the being of the person at whom it is directed. Raoul seemed to have been touched by a magic wand; he raised his head and his eye suddenly met those of the two sisters. With the adorable ready wit that never abandons a woman, Madame de Vandenesse seized a cross that lay against her throat, and held it up to him with a rapid, meaning smile. The jewel cast a gleam upon Raoul's brow, and he replied with a joyful expression; he understood.

"Is it not worth while, Eugénie," said the countess to her sister, "to restore a dead man to life in this way?"

"You are entitled to join the Society to Relieve Shipwrecked Sailors," replied Eugénie, with a smile.

"How sad and cast down he was when he came, but how happy he will go away!"

"Well, how are you getting on, my dear boy?" said Du Tillet, accosting Raoul with every appearance of friendliness, and pressing his hand.

"Why, like a man who has just received most encouraging reports of the elections. I shall be elected," replied Raoul, with radiant face.

"Delighted," rejoined Du Tillet. "We must have some money for the paper soon."

"We shall find some," said Raoul.

"Women have the devil on their side!" said Du Tillet without seeming to heed Raoul's words, whom he had dubbed *Charnathan*.

"What's the matter?" asked Raoul.

"My sister-in-law is in my wife's box," said the banker; "there's some deviltry on hand. The countess seems to be very fond of you, she bows to you across the whole hall."

"Look," said Madame du Tillet to her sister, "he's lying about us; my husband is wheedling Monsieur Nathan, and he's the man who's trying to put him in prison!"

"And men accuse us!" cried the countess. "I'll enlighten him."

She rose, took Vandenesse's arm—he was waiting for her in the corridor—and returned with radiant face to her box; then she left the Opéra, ordered her carriage to be ready before eight o'clock in the morning, and at half-past eight was on the Quai Conti, having taken Rue du Mail on the way.

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The carriage could not drive into the little Rue de Nevers; but as Schmucke lived in a house at the corner of the quay, the countess was not compelled to walk in the mud; she could almost jump from her carriage-step to the filthy, ruinous hall of the dingy old house, which was patched up with iron rivets like a concierge's crockery, and leaned over the street in a way to alarm passers-by.

The old precentor lived on the fourth floor, and enjoyed a lovely view of the Seine, from Pont Neuf to the hill of Chaillot. The good creature was so surprised when the footman announced his former pupil that, in his stupefaction, he allowed her to enter his apartment.

The countess had never imagined nor suspected the manner of existence suddenly revealed to her eyes, although she had long known Schmucke's profound contempt for dress and his very slight interest in the things of this world. Who could have conceived the absolute freedom and heedlessness of such a life? Schmucke was a musical Diogenes, he was not ashamed of his lack of order; he would have denied it, he was so used to it. The incessant use of a great German pipe had spread over the ceiling, over the wretched paper on the walls, scratched in numberless places by a cat, a yellowish tint, which gave everything in the room the aspect of Ceres'

golden harvests. The cat, clothed in a magnificent coat of long, tangled, silky hair that would have made a concierge green with envy, was present like the mistress of the house, undisturbed, with a grave bearded face. From the top of a fine Vienna piano where he was sitting magisterially, he cast upon the countess, when she entered, the same simpering yet indifferent glance with which any woman amazed at her beauty would have greeted her. He did not move, he simply waggled the silver threads of his straight moustaches and carried his golden eyes back to Schmucke. The piano, which was a decrepit affair, with a wooden frame painted black and gold, but dirty and dingy and cracked, exhibited a set of keys worn like an old horse's teeth, and yellowed by the fumes of pipe smoke. Little heaps of ashes on the keyboard told how Schmucke had ridden the old instrument to some musical debauch the night before. The floor, covered with dried mud, torn papers, pipe ashes and other inexplicable rubbish, resembled the floor of a boarding school when it has not been swept for a week, whence the servants eject piles of litter fitted for some place between the dungheap and the rag bag. A more practised eye than the countess's would have learned something concerning Schmucke's life from the chestnut shells, apple-parings and eggshells in plates carelessly broken and dirty with sauerkraut. This German *detritus* formed a carpet of unclean particles which cracked under the feet and centred about a heap of ashes that descended majestically from a

fireplace of painted stone, where a great lump of pit-coal sat enthroned with two sticks of wood pretending to burn in front of it. Over the fireplace was a pier glass in which faces seemed to be dancing a saraband; on one side hung the glorious pipe; on the other, was a Chinese jar in which the professor kept his tobacco. Two armchairs purchased at second-hand, as was the thin, flat couch, the worm-eaten commode with no marble top, and the rickety table on which were the remains of a frugal breakfast, composed the furniture of the apartment, simple as that of a Mohican's wigwam. A shaving-glass hanging on the sash of the curtainless window, surmounted by a tattered cloth streaked with dirt where the razor had been cleaned upon it, pointed to the only sacrifice Schmucke was accustomed to make to the Graces and to society. The cat, a feeble creature and his protégé, was the better favored; he revelled in an old sofa-cushion beside which were a cup and plate of white porcelain. But the thing that no words can describe was the condition to which Schmucke, his cat and his pipe, a living trinity, had reduced these articles of furniture. The pipe had burned the table here and there. The cat and Schmucke's head had smeared the green Utrecht velvet of the two armchairs with grease so thoroughly as to remove its rough surface. Except for the cat's splendid tail, which did its share of the housekeeping, the uncovered places on the commode and the piano would never have been swept. In a corner were piled the shoes which none but a Homer

could enumerate. The tops of the commode and piano were littered with music-books, with cracked worm-eaten backs, and mouldy, whitened corners, where the myriad layers of the pasteboard could be seen. The walls were plastered with great wafers to hold pupils' addresses. The number of wafers without papers represented addresses that had ceased to be. On the wall-paper were calculations made in chalk. The commode was adorned with beer jugs emptied the night before, which looked new and shiny amid all the old lumber and waste paper. Hygiene was represented by a jug of water covered with a towel, and a piece of common white soap, streaked with blue, which had spotted the rosewood in several places. Two hats of equal age were hanging on a hatrack, where the same old box-coat with three capes, that the countess had always seen Schmucke wear was also hanging. On the window-sill were three pots of flowers, German flowers of course, and near by a holly walking-stick.

Although the countess's sight and smell were disagreeably affected, Schmucke's smile and glance concealed these wretched details from her with rays of celestial light which made the yellow tints a blaze of glory and vivified the chaos. The soul of this divine creature, who knew and revealed so many divine things, sparkled like a sun. His hearty, ingenuous laugh at the sight of one of his Saint-Cecilias, was instinct with youth and gaiety and innocence. He poured forth man's dearest treasures

and made with them a cloak to hide his poverty. The most disdainful parvenu might well have deemed it a base thing to think of the frame in which this glorious apostle of the religion of music was set.

"Ah! py vat chance to you gome here, tear Montame la Gondesse?" said he. "Must I zing de zong of Zimeon ad my atche?"

This idea caused a renewed immoderate outburst of laughter.

"Am I in gut lug?" he continued with a cunning look.

Then he began to laugh again like a child.

"You gome vor de musik und nod vor ein boor man. I know," he said in a melancholy tone; "put gome for vat you vill, you know dat here everyding is for you, poty unt soul unt broberdy!"

He took the countess's hand, kissed it and deposited a tear upon it, for in the honest creature's mind every day was but the day after a benefaction. His joy had deprived him of his memory for a moment, only to restore it in all its force. He at once seized the chalk, leaped upon the armchair that stood by the piano, and wrote on the paper, as rapidly as a young man, in large letters: FEBRUARY 17, 1835. This pretty, ingenuous movement was executed in such a frenzy of gratitude that the countess was deeply moved.

"My sister is coming to see you," she said.

"De oder alzo! Ven? ven? may it pe pefore I tie!"

"She will come to thank you for a very great favor which I am going to ask you to do for her," she continued.

"Gwick! gwick, gwick, gwick!" cried Schmucke. "Vat moost I to? Go to de teufel?"

"Nothing but write: *Accepted for the sum of ten thousand francs* on each of these papers," she said, taking from her muff four notes of hand drawn in proper form by Nathan.

"Ha! dat vill pe zoon made," replied the German, as meek as a lamb. "Pud I know not vere are mein bens unt mein ink.—Get you avay vrom dere, Meinherr Mirr," he cried to the cat, who stared coldly at him. "Dat ist mein kat," he said, pointing him out to the countess. "Eed eez de boor animal vat leefs mit boor Schmucke! He ees hantzoom?"

"Yes," said the countess.

"Vood you lige him?" said he.

"Do you think of such a thing?" she replied. "Isn't he your friend?"

The cat, who was hiding the inkstand, seemed to understand that Schmucke wanted it, and leaped on to the bed.

"He ees meesjefus as ein mongey," said Schmucke pointing to him on the bed. "I call him Mirr, to clorivy our crate Hoffman of Perlin, whom I ferry vell knew."

The worthy man signed the notes with the unquestioning obedience of a child who does what his mother tells him to do, without understanding anything about it, but sure that he is doing right. He

was much more interested in the cat's introduction to the countess than in documents by virtue of which, according to the provisions of the law relative to foreigners, he might be deprived of his liberty forever.

"You azzure me dat deze liddle ztampt babers—"

"Don't be in the least alarmed," said the countess.

"I am not alarmt," he replied sharply. "I zay vill dese liddle ztampt babers bleaze Montame ti Dilet?"

"Oh! yes," said she, "you are doing her as great a service as if you were her father."

"Den I am ferry habby to pe to her ofe zome zerfiss. Hear me blay!" he exclaimed, laying the papers on the table and leaping to his piano.

The angel's hands were already galloping over the old keys, his eyes were already gazing through the roof to the skies, the most enchanting of songs was already springing into life in the air and making its way into the heart; but the countess did not allow this childlike interpreter of things celestial to make the keys and chords sing,—as Raphael's Saint-Cecilia does for the listening angels,—after the ink had had time to dry: she slipped the notes into her muff and called her radiant master back from the ethereal realms through which he was soaring, by putting her hand on his shoulder.

"My dear Schmucke," said she.

"Alretty!" he cried, with pitiable resignation. "Vy haf you gome ad all?"

He did not complain; he stood up like a faithful dog, to listen to the countess.

"My dear Schmucke," she continued, "it's a matter of life and death; every minute is a saving of blood and tears."

"Alvays de same," said he. "Go, anchel! try de dears of oders! Be zhur dat boor Schmucke abbrezhiates your fizid more dan your benzhun!"

"We shall meet again," said she; "you must come and play for us and dine with us every Sunday, under pain of making bad blood between us. I expect you next Sunday."

"Druly?"

"I beg you to come, and my sister will doubtless appoint a day also."

"Den my habbiness vill pe gombleed," said he, "for I only haf zeen you at de Champs-Hailyssées ven you haf bast dat vay in ein garritch, ferry zeldom!"

This thought dried the tears that were collecting in his eyes, and he offered his arm to his lovely pupil, who felt the old man's heart beating wildly.

"So you think of us sometimes?" said she.

"Alvays ven eading my pret!" he replied. "In de furst blaize az my penefacdresses, unt den as de du furst mädchens voordy to pe lofed I haf effer known!"

The countess dared say no more. There was an indescribable solemnity, respectful, faithful, religious, in that phrase. The smoky, dirt-encumbered room was a temple inhabited by two divinities.

Pure sentiment was growing hour by hour there, unknown to those who inspired it.

"Here we are loved, dearly loved," she thought.

The emotion with which old Schmucke watched the countess enter her carriage, was shared by her, and with the ends of her fingers she sent him one of the dainty kisses with which ladies bid one another good morning at a distance. That sight kept Schmucke planted upon the sidewalk long after the carriage had disappeared. A few moments later the countess drove into the courtyard of Madame de Nucingen's mansion. The baroness was not up; but, in order not to keep a lady of such high rank waiting in her anteroom, she arrayed herself in a peignoir and threw on a shawl.

"I come in the interest of a kind action, madame," said the countess, "so that promptness is a great favor; except for that I would not have disturbed you so early."

"Why, I am only too happy," said the banker's wife, taking the four notes and the countess's guaranty.

She rang for her maid.

"Thérèse, tell the cashier to bring me forty thousand francs himself, instantly."

Then she placed Madame de Vandenesse's letter in a secret drawer of her table, after sealing it.

"You have a lovely room," said the countess.

"Monsieur de Nucingen is going to take it away from me; he's building a new house."

"You'll give this one to your daughter, no

doubt. They say she is to marry Monsieur de Rastignac."

The cashier appeared just as Madame de Nucingen was about to reply; she took the bank-notes and handed him the four notes of hand.

"That will make your accounts balance," she said to the cashier.

"All put de tiscound," said the cashier. "Dis Schmucke ees ein musicien von Anspach," he added as he saw the signature, thereby causing the countess to shudder.

"Am I in business, pray?" said Madame de Nucingen, rebuking the cashier with a haughty glance. "This is my affair."

The cashier gazed in vain from the countess to the baroness; their features betrayed nothing.

"Go, leave us.—Be good enough to remain a few moments in order not to make them think that you had any interest in this matter," said the baroness to Madame de Vandenesse.

"I will ask you to add to your very great kindness the further favor of keeping this transaction secret," rejoined the countess.

"For a kind action, that goes without saying," replied the baroness with a smile. "I am going to send your carriage round to the rear of the garden without you; then we will walk across the garden together and no one will see you leave the house; it will make the whole affair perfectly inexplicable."

"You are as charitable as one who has suffered," said the countess.

"I don't know if I am charitable, but I have suffered terribly," said the baroness. "Your suffering has been to better purpose, I trust."

As soon as the order was given the countess put on her fur-lined slippers and a pelisse, and escorted the countess to the gate at the rear of her garden.

*

When a man has concocted a scheme like that Du Tillet had concocted against Nathan, he confides it to no one. Nucingen knew something of it, but his wife was an entire stranger to these Machiavelian manœuvres. But the baroness knew that Raoul was financially embarrassed, and she was not fooled by the sisters; she had a shrewd idea whose hands the money would go to and she was delighted to oblige the countess; indeed she had profound compassion for embarrassment of that description. Rastignac, who was in a position to fathom the schemes of the two bankers, came to breakfast with her. Delphine and Rastignac had no secrets from each other, and she described her interview with the countess. Rastignac, incapable of imagining that the baroness could ever be involved in this affair, which was in his eyes subsidiary to the main scheme, one means among many, enlightened her concerning it. Delphine had perhaps ruined Du Tillet's chances of election and rendered of no avail the trickery and sacrifices of a whole year. Rastignac, thereupon, posted the baroness fully, and urged her to keep silent as to the mistake she had made.

"If only the cashier doesn't mention it to Nucingen," said she.

A few moments before noon, while Du Tillet was at lunch, Gigonnet was announced.

"Show him in," said the banker, although his wife was at the table.

"Well, my old Shylock, is our man boxed up?"

"No."

"How's that? Didn't I tell you he was in Rue du Mail, Hotel—"

"He's paid," said Gigonnet, taking forty bank-notes from his pocket.

Du Tillet's face assumed a desperate expression.

"We must never turn a cold shoulder on good crowns," said Du Tillet's unemotional associate; "that may bring bad luck."

"Where did you get that money, madame?" said the banker, glaring at his wife in a way that made her blush to the roots of her hair.

"I don't know what you mean by such a question," said she.

"I'll go to the bottom of this mystery," he retorted, leaving the table in a rage. "You have upset my most cherished plans."

"You'll upset your own lunch," said Gigonnet, seizing the tablecloth, which was entangled with the skirt of Du Tillet's dressing-gown.

Madame du Tillet coolly rose to leave the room, for his words terrified her. She rang, and a footman appeared.

"My horses," said she. "Send for Virginie; I wish to dress."

"Where are you going?" snarled Du Tillet.

"Well-bred husbands don't question their wives," she retorted, "and you pretend to act like a gentleman."

"I shouldn't know you these last two days, since you've seen your impertinent sister twice."

"You ordered me to be impertinent," said she; "I am making a trial on you."

"Your servant, madame," said Gigonnet, but little interested in a family quarrel.

Du Tillet gazed fixedly at his wife, who returned his gaze without lowering her eyes.

"What does this mean?" said he.

"That I am no longer a little girl whom you can frighten," she replied. "I am and shall be all my life a good and loyal wife to you; you can be a master, if you choose, but a tyrant, no!"

Du Tillet went out.

Marie-Eugénie returned to her apartments worn out, after this effort.

"If it hadn't been for my sister's danger," she said to herself, "I should never have dared to defy him thus; but, as the proverb says, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

During the night, Madame du Tillet had gone over in her mind her sister's confidential conversation with her. Sure of Raoul's safety, her mind was no longer dominated by the thought of that imminent danger. She remembered the terrible earnestness with which the countess had spoken of flying with Nathan to console him for his disaster, if she could

not prevent it. She realized that the man might induce her sister, by the very excess of his gratitude and love, to do what the sage Eugénie looked upon as downright madness. There were recent instances in high life of such flights, which purchased a little uncertain pleasure at the cost of remorse and the loss of consideration suffered by those who occupy a false position; Eugénie remembered their frightful results. Du Tillet's words increased her alarm beyond measure; she feared that the whole thing would be discovered; she saw the Comtesse de Vandenesse's signature in the portfolio of the Nucingen establishment; she determined to implore her sister to confess everything to Félix.

Madame du Tillet did not find the countess. Félix was at home. A voice in her heart cried out to Eugénie to save her sister. To-morrow, perhaps, it would be too late. She took a great deal upon herself, but she resolved to tell the count the whole story. Would he not be indulgent when he found that his honor was still untarnished? The countess was misled rather than perverted. Eugénie feared that she was a coward and traitress to divulge secrets which all classes of society agree in respecting; but she looked forward to her sister's future, she trembled at the thought of finding her some day alone, ruined by Nathan, poor, ill, unhappy, in despair; she hesitated no longer, but sent to request the count to receive her. Félix, surprised at her visit, had a long conversation with his sister-in-law,

during which he seemed so calm and so self-controlled that she trembled lest he should decide upon some terrible resolution.

"Have no fear," Vandenesse said to her, "I will conduct myself in such a way that the countess will bless you some day. However disinclined you may be to conceal from her the fact that you have told me, give me credit for a few days. A few days are necessary to enable me to go to the bottom of certain mysterious circumstances which you do not perceive, and more than all else to enable me to act with prudence. Perhaps I shall clear up everything in a moment! I alone am guilty, my sister. All lovers play their little game; but all women are not fortunate enough to see life as it is."

Madame du Tillet took her leave, much comforted. Félix de Vandenesse went at once to the Banque de France and drew forty thousand francs; he hurried to Madame de Nucingen's, found her at home, thanked her for the confidence she had placed in his wife, and paid back the money. He explained this mysterious loan as due to the extravagant demands of a benevolence to which he had determined to put bounds.

"You need give me no explanation, monsieur, as Madame de Vandenesse has confessed everything to you," said the Baronne de Nucingen.

"She knows all," thought Vandenesse.

The baroness handed him the letter of guaranty and sent for the four notes. Vandenesse, during this

brief interval, bestowed upon the baroness the penetrating glance of a statesman; he almost disturbed her equanimity, and he deemed the moment propitious for negotiation.

"We live in a time when nothing is sure, madame," he said. "Thrones rise and disappear in France with frightful rapidity. Fifteen years make an end of a great empire, a monarchy, and a revolution as well. No one would dare take it upon himself to answer for the future. You know my attachment to the legitimate line. There is nothing extraordinary about these words coming from my mouth. Suppose anything should happen: wouldn't you be glad to have a friend in the triumphant party?"

"Most assuredly," she replied with a smile.

"Very well, do you care to have in me a debtor who could retain for Monsieur de Nucingen, if need were, the peerage to which he aspires?"

"What do you want me to do?" she cried.

"Very little," was the reply. "Tell me all you *know* about Nathan."

The baroness repeated the conversation she had had that morning with Rastignac, and said to the ex-peer of France as she handed him the four notes of hand brought to her by the cashier:

"Don't forget your promise."

Vandenesse was so far from forgetting that magical promise that he dangled it before the Baron de Rastignac's eyes as a means of obtaining some additional information from him.

When he left the baron, he dictated to a public scrivener the following letter to Florine:

"If Mademoiselle Florine wishes to know the first part she is to play, she is requested to attend the next ball at the Opéra, and to procure the escort of Monsieur Nathan."

Having put the letter in the post he went to his man of business, a very clever, keen-witted fellow, albeit perfectly honest; he asked him to play the part of a friend of Schmucke, to whom the German, feeling apprehensive somewhat tardily as to the meaning of the words: *Accepted for ten thousand francs*, repeated four times, had confided the secret of Madame de Vandenesse's visit; in that capacity he was to go and ask Monsieur Nathan for a note for forty thousand francs as security. It was a bold game to play. Nathan might be already informed as to how matters had been arranged, but it was necessary to venture a little to gain much. In her excitement, Marie might very well have forgotten to ask her Raoul for any document to protect Schmucke. The man of business went at once to the newspaper office and returned triumphantly to the count's house at five o'clock with a note for forty thousand francs; at the first words he exchanged with Nathan he found he could safely say that the countess sent him.

The success of this manœuvre made it necessary for Félix to prevent his wife from seeing Raoul until the Opéra ball, to which he intended to take her and there let her discover for herself Nathan's relations with Florine. He knew the countess's jealous

pride: he preferred to make her abandon her passion of her own volition, to give her no reason to blush beneath his eyes, and to show her in due time her own letters to Nathan sold by Florine, from whom he expected to be able to purchase them. This judicious plan, conceived so rapidly, already partly executed, was destined to fail through a trick of chance which modifies everything in this world. After dinner Félix led the conversation to the Opéra ball, remarking that Marie had never been to one of them; and he proposed that amusement to her for the next evening.

"I'll give you some one to poke fun at," said he.

"Ah! you will add greatly to my pleasure."

"To make the joke as enjoyable as possible, a woman ought to attack an illustrious victim, a celebrity, a man of intellect, and make him wish the devil had him. Would you like me to hand Nathan over to you? I shall have, from some one who knows Florine, secrets enough of his to drive him mad."

"Florine," said the countess, "the actress?"

Marie had already heard the name in the mouth of Quillet, the office-boy:—it passed through her mind like a flash.

"Why, yes, his mistress," replied the count. "Is that very surprising?"

"I thought Monsieur Nathan was too busy to have a mistress. Do authors have time to love?"

"I don't say that they love, my dear; but they are compelled to *lodge* somewhere, like all other men; and when they have no home of their own,

when the bailiffs are after them, they *lodge* with their mistresses; that may seem rather free to you, but it's infinitely better than to *lodge* in prison."

The fire was less red than the countess's cheeks.

"Will you have him for a victim? you would frighten him," the count continued, paying no heed to his wife's face. "I will put you in a way to prove to him that your brother-in-law Du Tillet is playing with him like a child. The wretch is trying to get him into prison, so as to make it impossible for him to come forward as his rival in the electoral district from which Nucingen was elected. I know from a friend of Florine's, the amount realized from the sale of her furniture, which she gave him to found his journal; I know what she sent him out of the harvest she reaped last year in the provinces and in Belgium—money which eventually benefits Du Tillet and Nucingen and Massol. The three together have sold the paper to the ministry in advance, they are so sure of ejecting this great man."

"Monsieur Nathan is incapable of accepting money from an actress."

"You don't know much about such people, my dear," said the count; "he won't deny the fact to you himself."

"I will certainly go to the ball," said the countess.

"You will be much amused," Vandenesse rejoined. "With such weapons, you will be able to give Nathan's self-esteem a good shaking-up, and you'll do him a service, too. You'll see him

fly into a rage, try to restrain himself and squirm under your stinging epigrams! In a joking way you can enlighten an intelligent fellow as to the danger that threatens him, and you will have the pleasure of beating the horses of the *juste milieu* in their own stable.—You aren't listening to me, my dear child."

"On the contrary, I am listening too intently," she replied. "I will tell you later why I am anxious to be sure of all this."

"Sure?" Vandenesse repeated. "Keep on your mask, and I will arrange it so that you will take supper with Nathan and Florine: it will be very amusing for a woman in your position to mystify an actress, after you have had a bout with a famous author and have kept his wits prancing about such momentous secrets; you can harness them both to the same mystification. I must try and get on the track of Nathan's infidelities. If I can learn the details of a recent adventure of his, you will enjoy the spectacle of a courtesan's wrath, a magnificent thing—Florine's will boil and seethe like an Alpine torrent: she adores Nathan, he is everything to her; she clings to him like the flesh to the bones, like a lioness to her cubs. I remember in my younger days seeing a famous actress who wrote like a cook come to one of my friends and demand her letters; I have never seen such a sight since—the tranquil fury, the majestic impertinence, the attitude of a savage—Are you ill, Marie?"

"No; they have made too much fire."

The countess threw herself upon a couch. Suddenly, with an impulsive movement impossible to foresee, suggested doubtless by the corroding pains of jealousy, she stood erect upon her trembling legs, folded her arms and walked slowly to her husband.

"What do you know?" she asked. "You are not the man to torture me, you would crush me without making me suffer if I were guilty."

"What do you want me to know, Marie?"

"Well, as to Nathan?"

"You think you love him, but you love a phantom constructed with words."

"Then you know—?"

"Everything," said he.

That word fell upon Marie's head like a club.

"If you prefer, I will never know anything," he continued. "You are in a mess, my child, and we must get you out of it; I have been at work already. Look."

He took from his pocket the letter of guaranty and Schmucke's four notes of hand, which the countess recognized, and threw them into the fire.

"What would have become of you, poor Marie, three months from now? You would have found yourself being dragged by bailiffs before the courts. Don't hang your head, don't humble yourself; you have been led astray by the noblest sentiments, you have flirted with poetic ideas and not with a man. All women,—all, do you hear, Marie?—would have been fascinated as you were. Wouldn't it be rather absurd of us men, who have committed innumerable

follies in twenty years, to insist that you should not be imprudent a single time in your whole lives? God forbid that I should triumph over you, or overwhelm you with pity, which you repelled so earnestly the other day. Perhaps the poor wretch was sincere when he wrote you, sincere in his suicide, sincere in going back to Florine the same evening. We are not to be compared with you. I am not speaking for myself at this moment, but for you. I am indulgent, but society is not; it avoids the woman who makes a scandal, it does not choose that the same person shall enjoy perfect happiness and social consideration. I can't say that it's just. The world is cruel, that's all. Perhaps it is more envious as a body than when taken in detail. A thief sitting in the pit applauds the triumph of innocence and will steal its jewels when he leaves the theatre. Society refuses to put down the evils it engenders; it awards honors to skilful trickery, and has no reward to bestow upon unassuming devotion. I know and see all this; but, if I cannot reform the world, at all events it is in my power to protect you against yourself. We have to do with a man who brings you nothing but misery, and not one of those holy, consecrated passions which sometimes command us to sacrifice ourselves, and which carry their own excuses with them. It may be that I have done wrong not to give more variety to your life, not to show you the difference between tranquil happiness and the more exciting forms of enjoyment, traveling, diversions of all sorts. But I can account

for the feeling that drew you toward a famous man by the jealousy you have caused certain women. Lady Dudley, Madame d'Espard, Madame de Manerville and my sister-in-law Émilie have had a hand in it all. Those women, against whom I tried to put you on your guard, have cultivated your curiosity more to annoy me than to expose you to storms which have howled all about you without harming you, I trust."

As she listened to these words, instinct with kindness, the countess was stirred by a thousand conflicting emotions; but the dominant force in the hurricane was ardent admiration for Félix. Proud and noble hearts are not slow to recognize the delicacy with which they are treated. Tact of this sort is to the emotions what grace is to the body. Marie appreciated the grandeur of soul that hastened to humble itself at an erring woman's feet in order not to see her blushes. She fled like a madwoman, but returned at once, impelled by the thought of the pain her action might cause her husband.

"Wait," she said to him, and disappeared.

Félix had adroitly prepared an excuse for her and he was soon rewarded for his good judgment; for his wife returned with all Nathan's letters in her hand, and gave them to him.

"Judge me," said she, kneeling at his feet.

"Is a man qualified to judge when he's in love?" was his reply.

He took the letters and threw them into the fire, for he knew that in the future his wife would never

be able to forgive him for having read them. Marie laid her head upon the count's knees and burst into tears.

"Where are yours, my child?" he said, raising her head.

At that question the countess ceased to feel the intolerable heat in her cheeks; she turned cold.

"In order that you may not suspect your husband of slandering the man you thought worthy of you, I will see that they are returned to you by Florine herself."

"Oh! why should he not return them at my request?"

"But suppose he should refuse?"

The countess hung her head.

"I am sick of the world," she said, "I don't care to go into society any more; I will live alone with you if you forgive me."

"You might be bored again. Besides, what would the world say if you were to turn your back on it abruptly? In the spring we will travel; we will go to Italy and all over Europe, waiting until you have more than one child to bring up. We must still go to the Opéra ball to-morrow, for we can't get your letters in any other way without compromising ourselves; and by the very act of bringing them to you will not Florine demonstrate her power?"

"And I shall see that thing?" said the horrified countess.

"Day after to-morrow in the morning."

*

The next night, toward midnight, at the Opéra ball, Nathan was promenading in the foyer with a mask leaning on his arm, and with a decidedly marital air. After two or three turns, two masked women accosted them.

"Poor fool! you are ruining yourself; Marie is here and looking at you," said Vandenesse, who was disguised as a woman, in Nathan's ear.

"If you take my advice you'll find out what Nathan is keeping secret from you, and that will show you what great danger threatens your love for him," said the countess in a trembling voice to Florine.

Nathan had abruptly dropped Florine's arm to follow the count, who passed out of sight in the crowd. Florine took a seat beside the countess, who led her to a bench where Vandenesse, having returned to protect his wife, was already sitting.

"Explain yourself, my dear," said Florine, "don't think to keep me waiting here long. No one on earth will ever take Raoul from me, you see, for I hold him by habit, which is every whit as strong as love."

"In the first place, are you Florine?" said Félix, resuming his natural voice.

"That's a bright question! if you don't know that, how do you expect me to believe you, donkey?"

"Go and ask Nathan, who is now looking for the mistress I am talking about, where he passed the night three days ago! He tried to suffocate himself, my dear, without your knowledge, for want of money. That's how much you know about the affairs of a man you say you love, and you leave him without a sou, and he kills himself; or rather he doesn't kill himself, he misses it. An unsuccessful suicide is as ridiculous as a duel without a scratch."

"You lie," said Florine. "He dined with me that day, but after sunset. The bailiffs were after the poor boy. He was in hiding, that's all."

"Well, then, go to the Hotel du Mail on Rue du Mail and ask if he wasn't brought there in a dying condition by a beautiful woman with whom he has been more or less intimate for a year; and your rival's letters are hidden right under your nose in your own house. If you would like to give Nathan a good lesson, we'll all three go to your house; there I will prove to you with the documents in my hand, that you can very soon prevent him from going to Rue de Clichy, if you'll be a good girl."

"Try to get somebody besides Florine to go with you, my boy. I'm sure that Nathan can't be in love with anybody."

"You would make me believe that he has been more attentive than ever to you for some time past, but that's the very fact that proves that he's very much in love—"

"With a woman in society, he?—"said Florine. "A little thing like that doesn't disturb me."

"Well, would you like to have him come and tell you that he won't take you home this morning?"

"If you get him to tell me that, I'll take you home with me and we'll look for those letters, which I won't believe in till I see them."

"Stay here," said Félix, "and watch."

He took his wife's arm and stationed himself a few steps away from Florine. Soon Nathan, who was rushing up and down the foyer, looking everywhere for his mask like a dog in search of his master, returned to the spot where he had received the hint. Reading his very evident preoccupation in his face, Florine took her stand like a wall in front of the journalist, and said to him in an imperious tone:

"I don't want you to leave me; I have my reasons."

"Marie!—" the countess, at her husband's suggestion, thereupon exclaimed in Raoul's ear. "Who is this woman? Leave her instantly, go out and wait for me at the foot of the staircase."

In this horrible extremity, Raoul shook Florine's arm violently; she was not expecting that manœuvre, and although she tried hard to hold him, she was obliged to let him go. Nathan at once plunged into the crowd and disappeared.

"What did I tell you?" cried Félix in the stupefied Florine's ear, as he offered her his arm.

"Whoever you are, come," said she. "Have you a carriage?"

For all reply, Vandenesse hurried Florine from

the room, and they joined his wife at a spot previously agreed upon under the peristyle. In a few moments the three masks, driven at full speed by Vandenesse's coachman, reached the actress's house, where she removed her mask. Madame de Vandenesse could not repress a start of surprise at the sight of Florine choking with rage, superb in her wrath and jealousy.

"There is a certain portfolio," said Vandenesse, "the key of which has never been entrusted to you; the letters should be in that."

"To tell the truth, I am puzzled; you know something that's been troubling me for several days," said Florine, hurrying into the dressing-room to get the portfolio.

Vandenesse saw his wife turn pale under her mask. Florine's bedroom had more to say as to the intimacy between the actress and Nathan than an ideal mistress would have cared to know. The female eye can see to the bottom of things of that sort in a moment, and the countess saw, in the promiscuous condition of things, a proof of what Vandenesse had told her.

Florine returned with the portfolio.

"How am I to open it?" said she.

She sent for her cook's carving-knife, and when the maid brought it to her, waved it above her head, saying in a mocking tone:

"This is what they kill *chickens* with!"

That remark, which made the countess shudder, explained to her even more clearly than her husband

had done the day before, the depth of the abyss into which she had almost fallen.

"What an idiot I am!" said Florine; "his razor'll do better."

She went to fetch the razor Nathan used for shaving, and cut a slit in the morocco large enough to allow Marie's letters to pass through. Florine took up one of them at random.

"Yes, this is certainly from a woman *comme il faut.* It looks to me as if there isn't a word spelled wrong."

Vandenesse took the letters and handed them to his wife, who went to a table to look them over and see if they were all there.

"Do you care to let me have them in exchange for this?" said Vandenesse, handing Florine the note for forty thousand francs.

"What a donkey he is to sign such things!—Take your letters," said Florine as she read the note. "Ah! I'll give you countesses! And to think that I was killing myself body and soul in the provinces to scrape money together for him, and that I let a broker put the screws on me to save him! That's a man: when you damn yourself for him, he'll walk over you! He shall pay me for this."

Madame de Vandenesse had made her escape with the letters.

"Hé! look here, my handsome mask! leave me just one of them to convince him."

"That isn't possible," said Vandenesse.

"Why not?"

"That mask is your ex-rival."

"Well, she might at least have thanked me!" cried Florine.

"Why, what do you take the forty thousand francs for?" said Vandenesse, saluting her.

It very rarely happens that young people, driven to attempt suicide, try it again after they have once undergone the agony of it. When the suicide fails to cure himself of the disease called life, he becomes cured of voluntary death. So it was that Raoul no longer had any desire to kill himself, even when he found that he was in a much more horrible position than that from which he had just been relieved, being confronted with the Schmucke note in Florine's possession, who had evidently received it from the Comte de Vandenesse. He tried to see the countess again to explain to her the nature of his love, which burned in his heart more ardently than ever. But the first time she met Raoul in society she gazed at him with the contemptuous stare that places an impassable chasm between a man and a woman. Despite his assurance, Nathan did not venture, during the rest of the winter, to speak to the countess, or even to go near her.

He opened his heart to Blondet, however: he insisted upon talking to him about Laura and Beatrice, apropos of Madame de Vandenesse. He paraphrased the beautiful passage for which we are indebted to the pen of one of the most noteworthy poets of our day: "O my ideal, blue flower, with the heart of gold, whose fibrous roots, a thousand times more

FLORINE, M. AND MME. DE VANDENESSE

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fine than fairies' silken tresses, plunge to the deep recesses of the heart to drink its purest essence; sweet and bitter flower! we can not pluck thee that thou dost not cause the heart to bleed, and from the broken stem red drops ooze forth! Ah! cursed flower, how it has twined its roots about my heart!"

"You're raving, my dear fellow," said Blondet; "I agree that it was a pretty flower, but it wasn't ideal, and, instead of singing like a blind man in front of an empty niche, you'd better think about washing your hands so as to make your submission to the government and fall into line. You're too great an artist to be a politician, and you've been made a fool of by men who aren't your equals. Think about being made a fool of again, but in another place."

"Marie can't prevent me from loving her," said Nathan. "I'll make her my Beatrice."

"My dear man, Beatrice was a small girl of twelve whom Dante never saw again; except for that, would she have been Beatrice? To make a divinity of a woman we don't want to see her in a cloak to-day, to-morrow in a low-necked dress, and the day after on the boulevard, haggling over the price of toys for her youngest. When one has Florine, who is, at one time or another, a vaudeville duchess, a good bourgeoise of melodrama, negress, marchioness, colonel, Swiss peasant, and Virgin of the Sun in Peru—her only way of being a virgin, by the way—I can't see how one can take chances with a society woman."

Du Tillet, in the jargon of the Bourse, closed out Nathan's contracts, and the journalist parted with his share in the newspaper, for lack of money. The illustrious man had but five votes in the college which elected the banker.

When the Comtesse de Vandenesse returned to Paris the following winter, after a long and happy trip through Italy, Nathan had justified all of Félix's anticipations: following Blondet's advice he was negotiating with the government. His personal affairs were in such confusion that the Comtesse Marie saw her former adorer on the Champs Elysées one day, on foot, in most lamentable array, with Florine on his arm. A man to whom a woman is indifferent is passably ugly in her eyes; but when she has ceased to love him, he is horrible to her, especially when he resembles Nathan. Madame de Vandenesse's cheeks flushed with shame at the thought that she had ever been interested in Raoul. If she had not been cured of all extraconjugal passion, the contrast between the count and that other man who had already forfeited his claim to public favor would have sufficed to make her prefer her husband to an angel.

To-day the ambitious youth, so rich in ink and so poor in will-power, has at last capitulated and taken refuge in a sinecure, like any man of moderate parts. After giving his support to all sorts of attempts at disorganization, he lives in peace in the shadow of a ministerial journal. The Cross of the Legion of Honor, once a fruitful subject of pleasantry to him,

now adorns his buttonhole. The *peace at any price* policy, upon which he had kept alive a revolutionary newspaper, is to-day the object of laudatory articles from his pen. Hereditary right, once so fiercely attacked by his Saint-Simonian periods, he defends to-day with the authority of commonsense. This illogical conduct has its origin and its cause in the change of front on the part of certain men, who, during our latest political evolutions, acted in the same way.

Jardies, December, 1838.

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